Cameroonian news media

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THE CAMEROONIAN NEWS MEDIA

by

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This study describes and examines the Cameroonian news media in 1974, a landmark year in the emerging nation of Cameroon and in the development of the country's journalism.

This is the first extensive study of the Cameroonian media. The research comprised interviews with 20 journalists who worked for the independent newspapers or the government media and a study of the six Cameroonian newspapers from April 1974 to December 1974 and the national radio network in April and May 1974.

The nation's press comprises two national newspapers controlled by the government and four independent newspapers, each appealing to a different public. Because Cameroon's official languages are French and English, the media exhibit many characteristics of British and French newspapers.

The media do not make a profit. Moreover, the journalists' job is complicated by the fact Cameroon is a new nation that is developing economically and politically.

The national media are trying to accelerate the development of Cameroon. The editors of the independent newspapers believe the public deserves complete information and news in which they are interested.

In 1974 the media reached about one-sixth of the population, a percentage that should increase rapidly as more Cameroonians become educated and earn regular incomes.
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INTRODUCTION

Cameroonian could call 1974 the Press Year. The government started two newspapers, a daily and a weekly, both named Cameroon Tribune. It was the first time that Cameroonians owned and operated a daily newspaper. Also, an independent journalist started a bi-weekly, the fourth independent newspaper. The first class of Cameroon-trained journalists was graduated in June, 1974, from the Ecole Supérieure Internationale de Journalisme de Yaoundé and started working for the national news media -- the media financed by the government. In 1974, for the first time, Cameroonians operated all the printed news media. They started to Africanize the national radio system in March, 1973. There was no television network in Cameroon in 1974.

The Cameroon Tribunes are printed by photo-offset in a modern national print shop called Arts Graphiques du Cameroun, which started production in 1974. AGRACAM was installed in 1972 by French technicians, who trained Cameroonians for two years to work in the shop.

The Cameroonian news media comprise government-funded and privately owned media using one of the two official languages, 

\footnote{Before decolonization, the highly influential French de Breteuil group published five dailies in the French colonies of Senegal, Guinea, Morocco, Ivory Coast and Cameroon. In Cameroon, de Breteuil's daily was La Presse du Cameroun, printed in Douala. It was discontinued June 30, 1974, having outlived the four other de Breteuil dailies.}
French and English, and sometimes both. The radio system is bilingual and also broadcasts in vernacular languages. The news media in Cameroon Jan. 1, 1975:

**Cameroon Tribune** daily, in French, is a five-column, 12-page tabloid printed in Yaoundé by AGRACAM and published by the Société Camerounaise de Publications since July 1, 1974. Circulation varies from 15,000 to 20,000. Engelbert Ngog-Hob is publisher-editor. The newspaper costs 40 Cameroon francs (16 cents).

**Cameroon Tribune** weekly, is the English counterpart of the daily. It is a five-column, 12-page tabloid printed in Yaoundé by AGRACAM and published by the Société Camerounaise de Publications since July 3, 1974. Ngog-Hob is publisher-editor. Circulation varies between 2,500 and 5,000. The paper comes out Wednesday and costs 50 Cameroon francs (20 cents).

**La Gazette**, a bi-weekly printed every three days in French and English, is a four-column tabloid of six pages. It is printed in Douala by the Société Générale d'Imprimerie. The owner-publisher-editor, Abodel Karimou, started publication July 16, 1974. Circulation averages 5,000 copies. The paper costs 25 FC (10 cents).

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2 The circulation figures for the Cameroon Tribunes and **La Gazette** were given by Mr. Jacques de Lestapis, director in Cameroon of the Société Africaine de Presse et d'Éditions Fusionnées, in a letter dated Dec. 30, 1974. SAPEF is de Breteuil's company. Lestapis manages the two national newspapers jointly with the Cameroonian government because SAPEF own a minority of assets in them.

3 $1 = 244 FC.
Le Courrier Sportif du Benin is a sports weekly, in French, which also carries a satirical column in pidgin (vernacular). It is a five-column, four-page tabloid printed in Douala by the Imprimerie Moderne. Henri Jong, owner-publisher-editor, started publication in 1955. Jong also owns the Imprimerie Moderne. He said circulation averages 5,000 copies. The paper costs 25 FC (10 cents) and comes out Tuesdays.

L'Effort Camerounais is a magazine-format Catholic weekly, in French, of four columns and 16 pages. It is printed in Yaoundé by the Imprimerie St. Paul. Father Jean Pierre Bayemi is the publisher-editor. The newspaper is owned by the Cameroonian bishops. Publication started in 1955. Bayemi said circulation averages 6,000 copies. The paper costs 50 FC (20 cents) and is published Fridays.

Cameroon Times is printed three times a week in Victoria by the Cameroon Times Press. It is a six-column, four-page tabloid published by United Publishers. Jerome Gwellem is publisher-editor. The newspaper, started in 1960, costs 25 FC (10 cents). Gwellem said circulation averages 8,000 copies. Gwellem is the associated press correspondent

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4 H. Jong, interview May 3, 1974, in Douala. Further references refer to this interview.

5 J.P. Bayemi, interview April 20, 1974, in Yaoundé. Further references refer to this interview.

6 J. Gwellem, interview April 30, 1974, in Victoria. Further references refer to this interview.
L'Union Nationale Camerounaise, the only legal political party, publishes a weekly propaganda paper, L'Unite, which seems to be distributed only at party meetings.

Cameroon has one broadcasting network, Radio-Cameroon. The director is Emmanuel Moudjih. The mean radio station is in Yaoundé and other stations broadcast from Douala, Garoua and Buea. Additional stations are being installed in Bamenda and Bafoussam.

Radio-Cameroon started to operate in 1963. It is financed by the government, which prohibits private broadcasting. Programs are aired in French, English and vernacular by the four stations, which also broadcast their own programs. "We broadcast for 13 hours a day and 17 hours on Sunday," Moudjih said. There are two and a half hours of straight news in a day's broadcasts. Moudjih said he considered the possibility of Radio-Cameroon broadcasting all day, but he would need more technicians and more material.

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7 E. Moudjih, interview April 24, 1974, in Yaoundé. Further references refer to this interview.
CHAPTER I

CAMEROON HISTORICAL AND POLITICAL PROFILE

Africa is the poorest continent in terms of news media. Hervé Bourges, director of the Ecole Supérieure Internationale de Journalisme de Yaoundé, wrote in a booklet entitled *Reflexion sur le Role de la Presse en Afrique* (study of the role of the African news media). Bourges noted that in a continent of 40 nations, only South Africa, Maurice Island and Madagascar have daily newspapers with circulation of more than five copies per 100 persons, that 15 nations have no daily, and that seven have only a daily stenciled news bulletin.

The Cameroonian news media are inadequate for a 6 million population because the media operate and develop in an "emerging nation", a term coined by the United Nations to replace the pejorative expressions "third world nation" and "underdeveloped nation." In the emerging Cameroon the government is the only power estate and thus plays an essential

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1 Bourges is also director of the department of study on the third world news media at the Institut Francais de Presse and general secretary of the Comite Technique Pedagogique des Ecoles Francaises de Journalisme.

role in developing the media. To understand the current operation and future of the news media, one must know about Cameroon's pattern of growth.

**History and Politics**

Cameroon was a German colony from 1884 to 1918, when it was separated and mandated to France and Britain by the League of Nations. France took the greater sector, East Cameroon, while Britain took charge of West Cameroon. The French sector became independent Jan. 1, 1961, after the 2 million population of West Cameroon voted to unite with French Cameroon. The United Republic of Cameroon comprises 474,000 square kilometers.

"The government plays an essential role in the creation of the nation and the new national public institutions," D.G. Lavroff wrote in *Les Partis Politiques en Afrique Noire* (the political parties in black Africa). "Thus the political organization -- understand the setting up of a strong government -- is more important than the gathering of a public consensus which created nations in the nineteenth century."\(^3\)

In other words, the African leaders thought state-controlled structures were the best means of organizing their nations. Leaders had to set up new governments and new administrations in their countries, Lavroff wrote. They

addressed the first problem by having elected representatives adopt constitutions, but creating administrative structures was more difficult.

Persons whose ideology ran counter to the new political independence could not be allowed to remain in government jobs. Also, the structures and methods of the colonial administration were inadequate to keep a firm hold on the populations, especially since the new governments had to build nations from colonial territories.

Lavroff describes the first years of independence as a long and difficult search for constitutional and administrative institutions that would adapt to the requirements of African countries. The crisis was manifest by a multiplication of constitutional texts and the ensuing political instability. In Cameroon, the crisis generated a civil war, a situation which is still occurring in the Northwestern province.

Most African leaders regarded the one-party system as the only way to avert anarchy and build national unity. Thus it appears normal that the party dominates the government and rules the country through the political and administrative structures it established. Lavroff wrote: "It is because the party represents the nation that it is completely merged with the government and so we can say that the leadership belongs to a government-party. The government-party is a national institution recognized by the constitution as is the legislative
The Cameroon National Union party, led by President Ahmadou Ahidjo, was formed Sept. 1, 1966, by merging Ahidjo's party with three political parties from English-speaking Cameroon. The English-speaking Cameroonians dissolved their parties "to follow President Ahidjo's persistent call for national unity." The CNU became the only authorized party, and Ahidjo exiled the unconciliatory leader of another party.

The government-party can override the constitution, Lavroff wrote. The party selects candidates for government positions, decides on the replacement or retention of government officials and administrative employes, originates the national policy and implements it through the administration it controls. The 120-member national assembly gives legal status to the party's decisions. Cameroonian journalists and foreign correspondents in Cameroon agree that Ahidjo personally makes the important decisions and allows his aides little initiative.

Cameroonian Realities

President since 1960, Ahidjo has been reelected every five years with 99 per cent of the votes. The March, 1975, presidential election offered no suspense. Ahidjo is head of government, head of state, head of the highest judicial council.

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4 Lavroff, Les Partis Politiques, p. 91.
and head of the armed forces. He shares legislative powers with the National Assembly and shares executive powers with his government, which he formed mostly with Cameroonians from his region and ethnic group, a Muslim tribe of the Foulbes in Northern Cameroon.

Ahidjo governs a population of 6 million divided into a mosaic of about 200 tribes. Tribal traditions still weigh more than the individual's freedom: "Tradition remains the potent force in the people's social, economic, moral and political activities," an ESIJY student reported.  

Tribes represent distinct ethnic groups and are traditionally antagonistic to each other. Four large ethnic groups are represented: the Bantus, the Semi-Bantus, the Kirdis, and the Foulbes. Each is subdivided into an uncounted number of tribes, and each tribe uses a different dialect.

The national borders drawn by Europeans do not follow an ethnic pattern. For example the Biafra Ibos tribes, which fought the Biafran war from 1967 to 1970 to win independence from Nigeria, are ethnically the same as the Bamileke who populate Western Cameroon. The Bamileke originated the civil war against Ahidjo's government in the mid-1960's. The army gradually stopped open violence in the cities, but one can hear rumors of acts of rebellion in Northwestern Cameroon.

Ahidjo has arranged the seven Cameroonian provinces

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6 Fontem Shu, "Persistence of Tradition," Special ESIJY, a stenciled bulletin, bi-monthly, issued by ESIJY students, (Yaoundé University, March 1, 1972), p. 12.
around the administrative capital, Yaoundé, population 178,000, and Douala, 250,000, the commercial capital and largest Cameroonian harbor. Despite Ahidjo's centralized administration, Cameroon's large and sparsely populated territory (11.5 inhabitants per square kilometer) is difficult to control. One sees the police everywhere, checking constantly on the population, stopping vehicles to learn the identity of motorists and what they carry. It is thought in the European community that half the Cameroonians are mercenary spies for the government and one should be careful in expressing an opinion.

In January, 1975, only three of the black African leaders who led their countries to independence and became presidents were still in power: President Ahidjo, the Ivory Coast's President Houphouet Boigny, and Senegal's President Leopold S. Senghor. The other charismatic leaders of independence days were removed by military take-overs. Niger's President Ahmadou Diori was the last to be murdered and replaced by an army government (April, 1974).

"The trend of military take-overs spreading through black Africa stems from the conservatism and sclerosis of the ruling class," Lavroff wrote. The leading classes engaged in profit-making instead of modernizing the social and economic structures of African countries. The new bourgeoisie forms local coalitions of scavengers. At this point the government—

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7 Les Partis Politiques, pp. 119-120.
party stops being the main agent of social mobility and fights
to contain the people's claims and desires for change. The
party's challengers have no alternative but violence. Leaders
are overthrown by a few hundred army men and the party members,
who are theoretically a few hundred thousand, do not react
because they never felt concerned by the political process.

Ahidjo carefully keeps a firm grip on the Cameroonians
and stops the opposition at its roots. Also, the manifest
interest of Ahidjo's government-party in the news media could
be interpreted as an attempt to bridge the gap separating
the government from the population and to create public opinion
in support of the government-party.
CHAPTER II

THE BESIEGED PRESS OF CAMEROON

Censorship

The Cameroonian news media are beset by government censorship and financial control. "It is one of the embarrassing ironies of the post-independence experience that African news media generally have less freedom to report and criticize today than they did under colonial administration," Peter Enahoro, editor of Africa magazine, wrote.¹ "When governments took over European-owned newspapers, they converted them into their own megaphones." That description fits the Cameroonian news media. The government also has a monopoly on news gathering and advertising through two national agencies: the Agence Camerounaise de Presse and Cameroun Publi-Expansion.

Because the institutions are new, the government is sensitive to criticism, according to Michel de Breteuil, director of the Société Africaine de Presse et d'Éditions Fusionnées.² Also, censorship is more strict than in other African countries because of Cameroon's political instability.

²M. de Breteuil, interview July 8, 1974, in Paris. Further references refer to this interview.
Andre Ngangue, director of the bureau of the Ministry of Information in Douala, said: "The government is conscious that the news media are a very dangerous instrument." Journalist François Evembe explained that the government distrusts and channels the news media because free media belongs to the unconditional democracies of North American and Western European white super-developed societies. In other words, the Cameroonian news media will be free when Cameroon is an industrial and democratic nation. At present, freedom of the press would only cause anarchy.

Government employes with the grade of district officers arbitrarily censor the news before it is printed by the independent newspapers. The two Cameroon Tribunes and the radio news broadcasts are not officially censored, but the staffs are responsible for screening the news. Ngog-Hob and Moudjih both agreed that their staffs edit the news to comply with the government's policy. Both directors avoided the word censorship. Moudjih summed up his situation with some humor: "Whoever controls the purse strings calls the tune". He explained that he and his staff follow the government's directives to focus news broadcasts on government stories -- such as openings of

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3 A. Ngangue, interview May 2, 1974, in Douala. Further references refer to this interview.
4 F. Evembe, director of ACAP in Douala, interview April 29, 1974, in Douala. Further references refer to this interview.
5 E. Ngog-Hob, interview April 19, 1974, in Yaoundé. Further references refer to this interview.
buildings and officials' travels in the provinces -- and stories about Cameroon's economic development -- such as job openings in new industries and new roads.

"We are technicians, we just obey orders," Moudjih said. The government wants to use the national news media to accelerate the development of Cameroon and educate the public. He added: "Our broadcasts teach people to get to work and produce, tell them how to modernize agriculture, for example, and encourage them to stay in the provinces instead of gathering in the slums of Douala and Yaounde. A few months ago the government asked us to revitalize the African culture, so we replaced all foreign music by African music. We try to develop a national identity."

"We must highlight government goals," the director of radio-Buea, Ngiewih Asunkioan, said. The government directives are precise and must be strictly followed by the journalists, who are also government employes. It does not take much to cause the replacement of independent-minded journalists. Evembe said he is setting a longevity record by being the ACAP director in Douala since 1969.

All independent newspapers also are censored. Editors must give their newspaper proofs to the district officers, who have three to four hours to censor them. When articles are censored, the newspapers appear with blank spaces.

Independent newspapers prefer prior restraint to

6 Ngiewih Asunkioan, interview May 6, 1974, in Buea. Further references refer to this interview.
the post-publication seizures that were common until 1971. "For a word, a picture, an article, the police would come and break our printing set up, which cost the paper a lot of money," Bayemi said. He added that since 1971, when the prior restraint policy was adopted, L'Effort Camerounais was seized only once, when the district officer was not as his post.

A special tribunal decided on the seizures of newspapers during the colonial period. Now an incompetent government employee is in charge of censoring, Gwellem said. "Only courts should limit the process of discussing and printing," he said. "No ill-qualified individual who knows nothing about journalism should censor a paper. Most of the time he loses the coherence of the story he censors. The story does not mean anything anymore."

The censoring officers suppress all material "not conducive to public peace," Gwellem said. This standard is so vague, the officer is so incompetent, and there is in Cameroon such a fear of the news media that journalists never know on what snake they are going to step. Lestapis said: "We are weary of every news item."

He said he published in La Presse Du Cameroun an unfavorable review on the performance of a singer from Zaire and was told by a government official

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7Jacques de Lestapis, interview May 6, 1974, in Douala. Lestapis was then publisher-editor of La Presse du Cameroun. Further references refer to this interview.
that he must not criticize a foreign friend. (Zaire and Cameroon are on good terms politically.)

Lestapis gave another example of arbitrary harassment by officials: He received complaints from a minister because he had sent a reporter to cover a tribal feast (the minister explained that traditions must be eliminated to give way to progress and national unity). If one starts to make the news a personal affair, journalists cannot report on anything because it always is going to hurt somebody, Lestapis said. In Cameroon, censorship is so arbitrary that it becomes a simple matter of taste.

The libel and sedition laws also are a form of censorship because of Cameroon politics -- one legal political party running the government, making and applying the law. "Nothing is printed that does not please the government," Gwellem said.

The Cameroon libel law forbids publication of items derogatory to an individual if they are false. The defense is truth, fair comment or printing an apology within a week after the accusation is made.

The sedition law forbids publications that could incite the public against the government. Truth is no defense against an accusation of sedition: "the greater the truth, the greater the offense," Gwellem said.

"We must never criticize either individuals or the institutions," Bayemi said. "We can only print light criticism if we put it in the form of hopes for improvement mixed with a
lot of admiring comments on what exists already. For example, we write that beautiful roads have been built since the independence and we suggest that maybe they should be repaired."

Journalists can avoid censorship if their reports are understood only by a minority of readers. Bayemi said a government official advised him to write his articles with words so elaborate that the majority of Cameroonians could not understand. Gwellem said his paper is not censored as much as French-language newspapers because only a third of the population can speak and read English. "We are more or less able to discuss any topic if we do not break the sedition law," Gwellem said.

The prior-restraint censorship probably will not be modified in the near future. "The laws are archaic and should be changed," Gwellem said. "I wrote memoranda to the Ministry of Information and to the minister, but I never received any answer."

All Ministry of Information officials deny that the Cameroon news media are censored, Lestapis said. Ngangue's answer to a question about the existence of censorship: "Of course the press is free in Cameroon, and anyway there cannot be any press or circulation of information if the media are not free." As officials refuse to acknowledge their policy of prior-restraint journalists cannot obtain any relief from censorship. "The policy of the officials is to deny the existence of our problems and so no progresses can be made,"

Lestapis said. The censorship offices are called officially "Service of Public Freedom."

"We make sure what journalists print or broadcast is true" is the official all-redeeming explanation of what Ministry of Information officials call "editing" the news. Ngog-Hob went further and criticized the inaccuracy of Western newspapers and radio stations, which he said often propagate false information and mere suppositions. In Gwellem's opinion, "the government does not allow a thousand thoughts."

The official and unofficial views regarding censorship actually diverge on the answer to the question, "Why circulate information?" Most independent Cameroonian journalists share with Western journalists the belief that circulating information is a goal in itself, while the government regards news as a fuel to refine so it will accelerate the development of Cameroon. Ngangue and Ewembe explained that in Cameroon the press is educative rather than informative because the government wants it that way. Officially, government employees do not pressure the news media; they refine the flow of news to improve its educative effect on Cameroonians.

Bourges upholds to some extent the government's pressure on the media, but he does not define guidelines for the censorship that he approves.\footnote{Hervé Bourges, interview Tuesday, April 23, 1974, in Yaoundé. Further references refer to this interview.} Bourges said: "The identity
of the Cameroonian nation has to be reinforced even if it is through censorship....The news media are the impetus essential to the development of African nations providing the media are defined better and applied to the cause of development. The educative role of the news media, which is important in advanced societies, becomes capital in emerging countries. Indeed, all collective transformations of mentalities and attitudes is dependent on the news media. In countries where there is no public opinion -- according to the meaning given to this term in Europe -- except in very small circles, it is way more urgent to explain and educate than to inform."\(^9\)

**The Cameroonians Support the Independent Newspapers**

As advanced societies increase the pace of their progress and leave the emerging nations farther behind, it is vital that Cameroon accelerate its development. However, the issue of development is not part of the individual's life. The average Cameroonian does not think about the necessity of developing his country any more than the average American thinks about personally stopping pollution. It is optimistic to think that Cameroonians read the newspapers and listen to the radio to educate themselves.

The government has taken up the role of the schoolmaster who knows best and will force the pupils to learn

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whatever their age. The people never were polled and asked what they expect from the news media and what news they are interested in, according to Moudjih.

The 6 million Cameroonian pupils do not seem to like one-sided lectures. Bayemi, Gwellem and Jong said the people are apathetic about the news media because they know that most of what is printed or broadcast is government propaganda. According to Gwellem people know that the government is not telling the truth: "They know that in the government news media everything is pre-arranged so it is not interesting. A newspaper is either a propaganda paper or it is a private paper that stands on its own feet. The government media are partial and not representative of the public. It is a one-way business."

It is obvious that if independent newspapers like Cameroon Times, L'Effort Camerounais, La Gazette and Le Courrier Sportif du Benin continue to publish, it is because the public backs them for independent publishers have no other support. Bayemi explained that government employes consider Cameroonian independent papers as opposition papers just because they present another point of view on the news, not the government's.

**Cameroon Times (Victoria)**

The Cameroon Times contains one page of sports news in its four pages. "Sports news helps sell the paper because people know sport events are truly reported," Gwellem said.
"Those are not reports the government censors or falsifies [and] the people enjoy reading about an event like a soccer game that they have seen and can discuss."

The public also finds in the Cameroon Times editorials and local news stories that the government news media do not carry or broadcast. Gwellem said he writes the editorials, which all deal with current issues very much part of the reader's life. To avoid accusations of libel, he does not identify individuals, and he does not attack the government for fear of the sedition law. However, he editorially opposes social plagues such as abuse of power by government employees.

"Cameroon Times calls for drastic measures to be taken against any power-drunk official who violates government policy, abuses his power in a naked bid to vent his vendetta against citizens," Gwellem wrote.¹⁰

Gwellem also condemns government corruption: "Cameroon Times appeals to all corrupt people to either resign their offices honourably or await doomsday when slowly and steadily the machinery of the law will catch up with them; they should feel for the tax payers and hearken to our leaders' call so that we can purge society of this evil."¹¹


In one editorial he accused some individuals — not named — of speculating on the rice and sugar shortage in Cameroon: "The situation in meeting local demands has not improved and one begins to wonder why our traders prefer to starve their own brothers at home and feed people outside because of monetary reward." ¹²

Cameroon Times correspondents — 15 according to Gwellem — cover criminal and misdemeanor trials in the English-speaking community. They also cover the local hospitals and report on weddings, births, deaths of prominent local figures, and accidents. Savory gossip from the English-speaking community sometimes appears on the front page. For example, a "talking boar" described by a correspondent as "wild and bizarre" was reported to have chased a woman out of her farm and allegedly seized her gown. ¹³

The Cameroon Times' extensive coverage of crimes and subsequent trials with pictures of the accused was criticized by a local police commissioner because he said it would prejudice the jury. Gwellem reported the commissioner's opinion and commented in an editorial emphasizing the people's right to know and the public duties of the press: "Publicity is not a privilege that can be denied to the Press [sic]. It


is a right. Except if the commissioner can quote instances
to warrant his statement, we of Cameroon Times wish to state
categorically that this statement is untenable and it borders
around trying to deprive the people of their right of being
easily and currently informed about matters that concern the
administration of justice in their own society. The Press,
as a vehicle of information, has its own code of conduct."

There is no law of journalism in Cameroon, and the
editor must decide what should be printed and what should
not (while keeping in mind censorship and the laws on libel
and sedition).

Gwellem said proudly that the public is his main news
source. His reporters often get the account of a crime from
neighbors as in the case of the "talking boar." The reliability
of the source sometimes is questionable because of sensationalism.
"Panic as Dead Woman Awakes"\textsuperscript{15} and "Man Jailed for Sucking
Blood"\textsuperscript{16} are examples of front-page headlines.

The vampire story was borrowed from Western newspapers,
because Gwellem thinks such stories appeal to his readers.

International news usually fills one column on the
third page. Gwellem said he wants the \textit{Cameroon Times} to reflect

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{14} Gwellem, "Can Published Pictures Influence Court
    Verdicts?" \textit{ibid.}, p. 4, cols. 3-4.
  \item \textsuperscript{15} \textit{Ibid.}, Sept. 19, 1974, p. 1, cols. 1-4.
  \item \textsuperscript{16} \textit{Ibid.}, Sept. 4, 1974, p. 1, cols. 1-4.
\end{itemize}
the life of the English-speaking community, and he focuses on economic stories "because [they are] important for people whose income is minimal like here." For example, he used the entire front page to cover an increase in hospital charges.17

The Cameroon Times usually prints two columns of letters to the editor on the second page. The topics are as varied as the individuals. The four letters in the issue of Sept. 4, 1974, concerned a demand to radio-Buea programmers to change the hour of a music program during which the public requests their favorite records, a protest against the corruption of custom officers, a demand for trained and neutral soccer referees and a disagreement with the content of a Cameroon Times article about the quality of a local soccer team.

Gwellem said he receives many letters and asks only that they be signed. He prints letters whose authors disagree with the authorities on minor issues: "Very often it concerns the appointment of so and so to an official job."

The Cameroon Times does not oppose the government politically -- it could not -- but it ignores the government and the official news as much as it can. Gwellem refuses to use the Agence Camerounaise de Presse as a news source because he thinks it is biased and dull. Judging from the longevity

of the Cameroon Times -- it was started in 1960 -- and the fact that its circulation is the largest among independent newspapers, the paper is what English Cameroonians want -- a mouthpiece.

The public also watches the newspaper for "meaty stories which the censorship officer has let go by mistake," Gwellém said. Such occasions are rare but they mean a complete sell out.

Gwellém said the duty of the press is to inform, educate and entertain. The Cameroon Times does so, in the colorful fashion of the English-speaking community it serves, and provides the public, left out of the political process, with a means of expression.

L'Effort Camerounais (Yaoundé)

L'Effort, the Catholic weekly, sells 6,000 copies throughout the Cameroon. Father Jean Pierre Bayemi said his policy is to present the news with more commentaries than a daily newspaper can present: "When four men are executed, for example, I explain why it happened, I state the law they broke and I show if the results of this law are positive or negative....Our motto and our program is to work with all Cameroonians for a better future. One day L'Effort Camerounais will stop publication undoubtedly. It will have died, God knows why, but an eternal smile will mark its entrance in history if it has brought a few key improvements on the
ascending way of a free Cameroon, prosperous and enjoyable to live in for all Cameroonians.  

Bayemi said he covers news of national interest and writes his news analyses with the welfare of the people in mind. The following topics were featured Dec. 20, 1974: an official gathering of farmers from Ngaoundéré province, modernization of the Cameroonian railways, roads being built, and the necessity of continuous medical observation of pregnant women.

Bayemi also informs the 800,000 Catholic Cameroonians about news in the Catholic community, such as nominations in the clergy and meetings of Catholic-run social and charitable institutions. Two pages are devoted to international news and sports news. Bayemi said he could not afford Agence Camerounaise de Presse news stories and has two reporters to help him cover African news. He sometimes reprints stories from foreign newspapers and magazines.

"Because of censorship, every article in the paper is too serious," Bayemi said. His editorials, under the headline "Free Comments from J.P. Bayemi," advocate only self-improvement. The public was fond of a satirical column he wrote in the early sixties, Bayemi said. The column supposedly was written by a naive Cameroonian peasant who did not understand

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the post-colonial society and criticized some trends, such as government employees changing their last names to sound as if they belonged to the same tribe as the President. The peasant also asked for inexpensive reforms and improvements such as public lavatories in the market squares of all towns. President Ahidjo criticized the column, so it was discontinued. Bayemi said: "We cannot print editorials like this now. The President is too sure of himself. He does not tolerate such things now."

In its serious and somewhat stuffy form, L'Effort appeals to cultured people. Cultured people are rare in Cameroon — literacy is in itself the only culture of the average Cameroonian.¹⁹

L'Effort had a deficit of 7 million Cameroon francs ($28,000) in 1974, Bayemi said. The Catholic German bishops lent money to the Cameroonian bishops to Bayemi could balance the budget of L'Effort within three years. However, L'Effort's financial position became worse because of a paper shortage and inflation.

L'Effort is too Cameroon-oriented to appeal to the white affluent community and too bland for the average Cameroonian to pay 50 FC (20 cents) to buy it, so its future is precarious. A representative of the Cameroonian bishops

¹⁹Breteuil said that during colonial times the West African church-owned newspapers virulently opposed the colonial administration and sided with the population. The local one-party government generally ended this militant journalism.
was quoted by a Cameroon Tribune reporter in the Dec. 16, 1974 issue as having said that L'Effort would be temporarily discontinued because of financial problems and a new formula for the newspaper was necessary.  \(^{20}\)

**La Gazette (Douala)**

The bi-weekly La Gazette has yet to prove it can survive government pressure, inflation and apathy toward news that readers know is censored.

La Gazette gives a picturesque and sometimes gruesome \(\text{/}\)\(\text{/}\) resume of the local news from Douala and the Littoral province and international news that concerns Cameroonians indirectly. (For example, an article adapted from Newsweek on the possibility that the U.S. and its allies might start a war against oil-producing countries to reduce oil prices.) \(^{21}\)

The Cameroonian news generally includes a small percentage of sports and economic news of national interest (creating a bank in Yaounde \(^{22}\)) and several items from Douala.

La Gazette reporters provide detailed coverage of crimes and accidents in Douala. The Dec. 21, 1974 issue included stories about a fight between military personnel and

\(^{20}\)"L'Effort Camerounais stoppe Temporairement," Cameroon Tribune daily, Dec. 16, 1974, p. 4, cols. 4-5.

\(^{21}\)"Can the U.S. and Their Allies Start a War for Oil?" La Gazette, Dec. 21, 1974, p. 1, cols. 3-4; p. 6, cols. 1-4.

civilians, a woman accused of witchcraft and taken to court, and an attempted rape of a 5-year-old girl (the reporter identified her and spared no details). There are reports of two fires: "Tounka Claude, alone in the house, lighted a candle and went in his bedroom to do his homework. He came out a moment later to go to the bathroom. That is when the precariously-placed candle fell over his notes which took fire; the flames spread to the plank walls and the whole hut was rapidly engulfed in flames."26

La Gazette is bilingual but English is used mostly on the "News Forum" (editorial) page. When editorials are not printed, the paper is all in French. Letters to the editor, printed on the "News Forum" page, are usually from English-speaking Cameroonians.

A journalist using the pseudonym Davy Sparkles writes editorial satires under the headline "Times Try Men's Soul." Here is what he wrote about inflation -- especially about the fact that wage increases cannot match food prices if unscrupulous persons continue to speculate about food shortages:

"More grease to your elbows, our able government, and down with cheats and those who want to capitalize on us because of the little increase we have now been promised by gov't."

Sparkles concludes with a comment about corrupt government employees: "My editor has just warned me against ever asking him any increase of salary for, as he puts it, The Gazette has just started. I too have warned him that failing to increase my wages, I shall take him to the wage inspector and we two shall dig it out there. My editor said he shall take an envelope to the inspector and I shall be the loser. What a wonderful world."27

In the absence of opinion polls, the following letter to La Gazette may indicate what the public thinks about Cameroon journalism: "The creation of another newspaper, The Gazette, to me presents a journalistic epitome worth emulating by others. Cameroon has for long been starved of many newspapers which we very much long for, and such could be government-controlled, privately-owned, with entirely independent views, but all working toward the same goal, which is the goal of national reconstruction. Bravo and long life to The Gazette for the good of Cameroon."28


28E.T. Ndifang, letter from the "Letter Box" column, ibid., p. 2, cols. 2-4.
Henri Jong, the publisher and editor, wrote in an editorial for *Le Courrier Sportif* that he was trying to bring out the truth about sports: "We have always sustained this fight bravely because we think that the atmosphere of sports in which the Cameroonian youth is born, lives and grows up should be a healthy atmosphere." That editorial appeared on the 19th anniversary of *Le Courrier Sportif*, and Jong observed that after 19 years it was difficult to achieve his goal and keep publishing: "For a newspaper like ours with practically no means, these past nineteen years were years of difficulties, efforts and sacrifices. They were years of desperate, unequal and exhausting contest."

Jong writes and edits all the copy. *Le Courrier Sportif* is printed on a cylinder press in Jong's printing shop which employs 25 persons. An editorial usually appears on the front page. "One is still allowed to print critics of sports events," Jong said. He wrote editorials about the scandal of the African Soccer Cup -- decisions of the referees were questioned -- and about some stadium employes who tampered with the receipts.

Jong said he had been sued because of his editorials, but he always had won the cases because he did not name individuals

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30 Ibid.
and thus could not be found guilty of libel.

*Le Courrier Sportif* contains about three pages of local sports news written by Jong from information provided by spectators at sporting events. He also uses scores broadcast by Radio-Cameroon.

The newspaper carries some international sports news, some legal announcements -- births, weddings and obituaries -- and a satirical column in pidgin (vernacular language) about town gossip. The national daily cannot compete with *Le Courrier Sportif*, he explained, because the daily is distributed in Douala at about 11 a.m. while his paper is sold on the streets at 7 a.m. Tuesdays and contains weekend sports results.

Jong said he is losing the will that has driven him to publish his paper, because the competition with the government media, especially Radio-Cameroon, is draining the small resources of the independent publishers. He hopes independent publishers will become stronger when and if some graduates of the *Ecole Supérieur Internationale de Journalism de Yaoundé* start newspapers of their own.

However, the government decides what is best for the Cameroonian media and how national construction will be achieved.

English-speaking journalists have a little more freedom to express their opinions than do their French-speaking colleagues, but the government's view is the one heard most often. "I have high regards [sic] for the English press and its objectivity," Gwellem said. "Here press freedom will come
after 3,000 years of fighting. The French have left their journalistic tradition and that means control of what is printed. The Cameroonian government is interested in the news media to control them." Gwellem said that since Cameroon is a developing country, the government should borrow funds to aid the progress and development of the news media.

**Government Control of News Sources**

The government controls news-media sources through its news agency, Agence Camerounaise de Presse (ACAP), and makes it almost impossible for independent journalists to obtain information.

**Agence Camerounaise de Presse**

The government established ACAP, the Cameroonian news agency, Jan. 20, 1960, and controls it.

ACAP has a monopoly on receiving and distributing national and international news. Ngog-Hob, director from 1970 to December 1974, stated the policy as outlined in the founding act: "ACAP will research in Cameroon the elements of a complete and objective information with all the appropriate means, receive a constant service of international news for which it has the national exclusivity by convention or contract with the international wire services, sell this national and international information to all private or public users. ACAP must help promote the broadcasted and printed media."

ACAP receives Agence France Presse, Reuter, Tass and

Ngog-Hob employs 80 persons to gather news in Cameroon and has offices in each of the seven provinces. Government employes trained on the job gather the news and send it by wire to the Yaounde main office. For example, the director of the ACAP bureau in Douala, François Evembe, said he covers the Littoral province, 85,000 square kilometers, with 23 correspondents attached to local government officials. Most of the ACAP reports from the provinces concern official ceremonies, inaugurations and banquets and little if any investigative reporting. ACAP news coverage focuses on the larger towns.

ACAP filters or "molds" the news, according to Ngog-Hob. He said he gives priority to news that shows the economic progress of Cameroon and can give the nation "the dynamic of development." Moreover, ACAP gathers news items that show that the government is working to improve the economy.

ACAP promotes Cameroon unity by gathering news from throughout the nation, but it does not gather and distribute complete and objective information from inside and outside Cameroon. It blacked out news of a coup attempted in the spring
of 1974 against the Gabon government.\textsuperscript{31} Evembe acknowledged the blackout and contended that news of the coup was irrelevant to Cameroonians and unimportant: "Besides, the government of Gabon won and is still in place."

ACAP offices in the provinces throw an official light on the vast Cameroon territory, which is unopened to civilization and the media. The geography helps ACAP correspondents ignore news that the government does not want disseminated.

I was informed by Cameroonian friends in April 1974 that the Cameroonian and Nigerian armies were fighting for possession of border territories where oil had been found, but I did not find any reports of the fighting in the newspapers published during this period.

Nor did ACAP distribute reports on the break in of an army camp in Edea and the stealing of weapons in the last week of April 1974. A French businessman told me about the break in because I asked him why the police searched my car when I went to Edea May 1, 1974. Everybody in Edea and the surrounding province must have learned about the break in, since the police actively tried to recover the stolen weapons -- Cameroonians from Edea told me that for weeks the police searched all cars leaving or entering the town. However, no news of the event or its repercussions was seen or heard in the media. The public

\textsuperscript{31}Rumors of the attempted coup reached the European community in Cameroon in March 1974.
was informed better and quicker by the street rumors or "Arab wire service", as the French call it.

Comparatively little information appears in the news media, the second editor of the party weekly publication, Mr. Kwi Shwe, said. Most news spreads quickly by word of mouth in the streets.

The luxury of ACAP offices in Yaoundé indicates that the government duly appreciates the importance of having one national news agency controlling distribution of news to the media. The building is new, the offices are clean, and in the director's office sounds are muffled by leather-padded doors.

Because only the national media — the radio and the two Cameroon Tribunes — use ACAP, it was difficult to believe Ngog-Hob when he said that the ACAP budget was balanced and he did not draw money from the Treasury except in case of hardship.

ACAP has a small additional source of revenue: it publishes a daily stenciled bulletin of wire copy, which costs 100 FC (60 cents) and is distributed mostly to European businessmen who have subscribed to it. The Agence Camerounaise de Presse bulletin is written in French and English and averages 40 pages an edition. It covers equally national and international

32 K. Shwe, interview April 24, 1974 in Yaoundé.
news and has a circulation of about 2,500. Ngog-Hob said the ACAP bulletin was published to compensate for the fact that there is only one daily newspaper.

In summary, ACAP provides a trickle of purified news because it lacks competent personnel and freedom of action.

The Challenge of News Gathering For Journalists

The government's most damaging policy against the news media is the game of hide and seek officials play with journalists instead of informing the press about what is going on in the government and in Cameroon. Since the government controls the nation's political, economic and social life, government employes are the main news sources. But they do not cooperate with journalists because they are "more authoritarian and less talkative than the French colonial government," E vembe explained.

Government and administration officials either are afraid to make a public blunder or care nothing about informing the press. As a result, "there are no news sources and no information in Cameroon," according to Mr. Jean François Prause, Agence France Presse correspondent in Cameroon.33 Other journalists working in Cameroon support Prause's judgment. "The press secretaries attached to all ministries are always

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33 J.F. Prause, interview April 23, 1974, in Yaounde. Further references refer to this interview.
the last ones to be informed of what is happening in their ministry," Jacques de Lestapis said. When Father Jean Pierre Bayemi asked the ministries to send him data on the progress achieved by the Cameroon nation since its independence because he wanted to put out a special edition of L'Effort in 1971 to celebrate the 10th anniversary of independence, he received three thin folders from three ministries: Agriculture, Cattle Breeding, and Tourism.

The Ministry of Information and Documentation is of little service to the local press. It comprises a dozen dirty offices, where I saw some employees sleep and where stacks of papers gather dust. Bayemi said he sometimes buys photographs from the Information and Press Department because they are cheap, "but the employees have to be in a good mood to provide them." Nor is the documentation service much help. The newspapers and magazines it receives from around the world, plus the local newspapers, pile up in a two-room shed where "eight employees cannot keep up with the filing work," according to Mr. M. Barga, treasurer of the documentation service. 34

The competence of the staff of the Ministry of Information is limited. According to Lestapis, E. Ndjilrinya, Department of Information and Press director who works directly

34 M. Barga, interview April 23, 1974, in Yaoundé.
under the minister, does not have a high school diploma. As I was waiting to see Ndjilrinya his secretary let me know that she did not know how to use a phone directory.

Ndjilrinya said he employs about 80 correspondents in the provincial capitals. "As director, my goal is to distribute information under the form of photographs and written reports in Cameroon and abroad," he said. The Ministry of Information publishes the monthly Cameroon Information, a bilingual magazine for foreigners and for Cameroonians studying abroad. It is a kind of sales pitch on Cameroon development. No doubt the same type of news is provided to foreign journalists whom Ndjilrinya said he must "guide" while they are in Cameroon.

All high-ranking government employees in journalism like Ndjilrinya, Ngog-Hob, Moudjih and Ngangue gave me interviews readily enough, but they usually were secretive. They were careful not to deviate from the official view whatever the topic. They seemed open, especially Moudjih and Ngog-Hob who received Master's degrees in journalism in Canada and France. However, they refused to let me talk with their employes and regarded my request as a personal offense. "My reporters cannot tell you more than I can," Moudjih said, and Ngog-Hob gave strict orders that I could not communicate with the personnel who helped him plan the publication of Cameroon

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35 E. Ndjilrinya, interview April 23, 1974, in Yaoundé.
Tribune, which was to come out in June.

Apparently only the top man of any government agency may speak to the press, and if high-ranking government journalists are that secretive, one can imagine the kind of cooperation reporters get from other officials.

Lestapis said that in April 1974 journalists complained to President Ahidjo that they could not get information from officials and noted that the President's previous trip to Europe was announced in the European media but not in the Cameroonian media. The President said nobody in any media would know when he takes a trip.

Ahidjo gives about two press conferences a year and his ministers one monthly, Lestapis said, but the meetings are useless. Prause described a press conference he attended in April 1974: There were 70 journalists in the room, 60 from the ACAP. The minister -- he did not say which one -- made a brief speech in English and offered to translate it, but most of the reporters said that was not necessary. Then for three hours he read his answers to a few questions presented beforehand by the Ministry of Information. The text of his initial speech was not distributed because only two copies were available.

Prause said journalists cannot report on political news other than official receptions at the President's palace and official government meetings. Journalists are not supposed to seek the news, and they take a big risk if they do. Two
Agence France Presse correspondents were expelled -- one in 1972 and one in 1974 -- before Prause got his job in February 1974. Lestapis explained that Prause's predecessor sent to Paris the text of an interview he had with an official, who later said it was off the record and had the correspondent expelled. "Prause has learned the lesson," Lestapis said. He asked Prause in April 1974 to investigate a rumor that several Chinese technicians had arrived in Cameroon and Prause refused, saying he did not want to endanger his position by investigating anything that could be politically colored.

The history of Cameroonian journalism does not include bloody repression as in Uganda, where the editor of a Catholic newspaper was found handcuffed to the steering wheel of his burned car; he had been strangled and shot. Cameroonian journalists have learned to make the best of the information they can report: "My friends advise me to fold up the newspaper because what I can do is not journalism, but I think it is important to say things between the lines, say things even if they are diluted and sugar-coated," Bayemi said.

Gwellem said he tries to get the news out because he believes in the people's right to know; he has been jailed three times. "Sometimes I won my case, sometimes I had to pay

36 The government checks on foreign correspondents when their copy is received on ACAP wires.

a fine," he said. Because the public is Gwellem's main news source, he has fewer problems in gathering information than do his French-speaking colleagues. "It is typical of African English newspapers to consider that the acts of the people are more important than the acts of government officials," Breteuil explained when asked to contrast the French and English Cameroonian presses. "For example, instead of covering the administrative aspect of a government official's public appearance, the English paper will comment on the crowd scuffle before the barriers."

Some foreign correspondents who operate in Cameroon said they could get the information they needed through unofficial sources and personal relationships. "As far as news sources are concerned, only personal relationships count," A. Valeri, TASS correspondent said. "News conferences are inefficient because the ministers are afraid of stating something that will not please the President."  

The Reuter's correspondent, Daniel Mongoué, a Cameroonian, said he can get all the information he needs from the government. Valeri and Mongoué do not do investigative

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38 A. Valeri, interview April 23, 1974, in Yaoundé.
reporting that concerns politics. Valeri said he focuses on the social news in Cameroon. Mongoué said the government never has reprimanded him in 15 years.

In 1974 greater freedom to get and report the news appeared unlikely, but there were indications that the young Cameroonians who go to the Yaoundé University and will hold responsible jobs will not accept secrecy as the older generation does and will not fear the government as much. The students went on strike in December 1973 because the government tried to interfere with the awarding of university scholarships. University students often visit Prause to volunteer information.
CHAPTER III

THE NATIONAL NEWS MEDIA

Radio-Cameroon

Radio-Cameroon, the only national network, broadcasts from four stations: The main station in Yaoundé covers the Southeast, Radio-Douala the Littoral Province, Radio-Buea the ex-English Northwestern Cameroon and Radio-Garoua the North.

The news programs are in French, English and vernacular. Since few of the technicians and journalists are bilingual, two editorial teams, French and English, produce the two and one-half hours of daily news programs at each station. The Agence Camerounaise de Presse (ACAP) is the main news source and the Radio-Cameroon staff edits all news.

"We have two styles of broadcasting," the director, Emmanuel Moudjih said. "This actually gives our radio a Cameroonian style. The English team gives hard news and the French team gives comments." The main news items are supposed to be the same in the French and English broadcasts, but because the teams cater to different publics, they emphasize different stories.

Moudjih employs 15 technicians and journalists at Radio-Yaoundé. Some were trained at the British Broadcasting Corporation school in Canada, but most were trained in France.
by the Office National de Radio et Télévision Françaises.

"We want the radio to be as representative of Cameroon as possible, so we try to develop a national identity by promoting the use of both official languages," Moudjih said. Part of the public understands only vernacular languages, so Radio-Yaoundé broadcasts short news spots in the three main local dialects -- Bamileké, Bassa and Ewondo. No dialects predominate in Radio-Buea's territory, so it broadcasts news spots in a different vernacular language each day of the week.

Moudjih, named director of Radio-Cameroon in March 1973, said his main achievements have been to Africanize the programs and to have the four stations broadcast the same news program at the same hour (5 p.m.). Each station broadcasts independent programs for 13 hours a day and 17 hours on Sunday. Moudjih hoped Radio-Cameroon soon could afford to lengthen its broadcasts.

Radio-Cameroon depends entirely on the government for funding. Payments to the stations for advertising go directly to the Department of Treasury. The yearly operational cost of Radio Cameroon averages 200 million FC ($800,000). Moudjih and other journalists used to broadcast from a roving van

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1 The Africanization of the radio means that 70 percent of all programs are produced in Cameroon, or, if they are musical programs, in other African countries.
when the French ran the network. In 1963 the government started to fund Radio-Cameroon and replaced the French staff with Cameroonians.

At Radio-Buea, the English station set up in 1967, the public may participate in the news. "An hour a week we have a viewpoint program during which we answer the public's letters," Ngiewih Asunkioan, director of Radio-Buea said. The staff tries to make Radio-Buea a tool useful to the community by informing the people about the government's policy and allowing the community to question that policy.

Asunkioan said the government will not permit him to discuss highly sensitive issues like the military, development policy and foreign affairs. The people write mostly about specific local issues or something they think is wrong, like an incompetent government employe or archaic social customs (the tradition that a bridegroom must pay his future father-in-law a large sum for permission to marry his daughter). "We encourage people to write us, but they don't need it," Asunkioan said. In the English-speaking community, people feel free to discuss issues and write letters to the station because their liberal upbringing differed from the education of the middle-aged generation in French Cameroon, he said. In Northwestern Cameroon, people ask questions even if they are not asked for their opinion. They are more critical.

Daniel Amiot-Prisot, technical counsel to the Ministry of Information, explained that Cameroon regionalized its radio
network because it was too difficult to serve from one town a mosaic of tribes and cultures. The programs of each station can be adapted to the needs of the area it serves.

Amiot-Prisot estimated the radio audience at 800,000. No figures are available because Cameroonians do not pay the tax on radio sets and many sets are smuggled in and sold on the black market, he said, adding: "We are working on developing Radio-Cameroon with the construction of two more stations in the Northwestern towns of Bamenda and Bafoussam. The stations will start broadcasting in 1975 and we are currently studying the possibility of installing a television network two or three years from now, we hope."

Cameroon Tribune Daily

The line under the name Cameroon Tribune is "grand quotidien national d'information" (great national daily newspaper). Cameroon Tribune is the first and only national daily; national means that the government owns 70 per cent of the shares of the publishing company -- Société Camerounaise de Publications -- and that an all-Cameroonian staff produces the daily which focuses on Cameroon and is published in Yaoundé, the capital. The 12-page tabloid is in French.
Camerounaise de Publications also started a weekly, English-language Cameroon Tribune, which is the same size as the daily and is produced by an English-speaking staff. To produce both newspapers, publisher-editor Ngog-Hob employs 15 journalists, all 1974 graduates of the Ecole Supérieure Internationale de Journalisme de Yaoundé -- its first graduating class.

Among the Cameroon newspapers, the daily Cameroon Tribune most resembles the western press because of its attractive make-up and in depth reporting -- within the limits of censorship, of course. It has the largest circulation and is produced in the most modern Cameroonian print shop. It also is expensive for the average Cameroonian at 40 FC (16 cents).

Breteuil said the Cameroon Tribune is a great improvement on the former French-owned daily, La Presse du Cameroun, which usually contained 8,500 lines of ACAP wire copy and only 2,500 lines written by the staff. The Cameroon Tribune carries about two pages of wire copy and 10 pages of in depth reporting on social issues and national news.

The Cameroon Tribune was begun because in 1974 the nation needed a freer and truly modern newspaper, Evembe explained. "Everything is relative and every situation is

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4 The Arts Graphiques du Cameroun offset shop can produce 15,000 copies of the Cameroon Tribune an hour.
evolutive," he said. "Some of the news printed now would have been censored two years ago. We are at a crossroad and we will go, I think, toward a liberalization of the press. Until 1960 press freedom was incredible; newspapers were created by the dozen; then press freedom was severely limited for 10 years, and now the evolution goes in the right direction."

Also de Breteuil's company refused to pay for replacement of the 40-year-old cylinder press that printed *La Presse Du Cameroun,* and for prestige and efficiency the government needed a national daily produced by competent Cameroon-trained journalists. "A country without newspapers and without journalists is a country without efficiency," a Dahomean writer and journalist said in the daily *Cameroon Tribune.*

Cameroon Tribune Investigative Reporting

The new daily undertakes reporting never attempted by the staff of *La Presse du Cameroun.* The ESIJY-trained journalists completed their training with one year of work and study in Canada and France, and the prestige of the new daily

5 The process of Africanization is underway in all French businesses, which are selling their shares to Cameroonian.

makes it freer from pressure. "The wider the readership of a paper, the less seizable the paper is," de Breteuil explained. "It does not take much to seize or criticize a paper which is not in the public's eye, but it takes impetus to curb a national daily."

The new and most important reporting is the daily in-depth social reports on pages two and three under the headline "A l'Ecoute de la Nation" (Listening to the Nation). Topics such as the increasing danger of fires in fast-growing and ill-equipped towns, slums, the lucrative trade of private money-lending, the need for parking lots, agricultural ventures--like the new rice and tea production--and juvenile delinquency have been investigated. Sometimes the different aspects of a problem are discussed in subsequent issues. The reporters do not editorialize and urge the government for reforms, but their well-documented stories examine the real causes of problems.

For example, a reporter named Ndembiyembe wrote that with few exceptions private doctors become rich fast and the number of lucrative private hospitals is increasing.\(^7\). The doctors who operate the hospitals ignore professional ethics to concentrate on making money. For instance, they establish maternity and surgical departments, because they are the most

\(^7\)Ndembiyembe, "Infrastructure Medicale," op. cit., July 12, 1974, p. 3, cols. 5-6.
lucrative. The public's needs are ignored.

Ndembiyembe reported that the average hospital is "dirty as a pigsty" and patients must provide their food and beds. Also some doctors have kick-back agreements with drugstores to which they send patients. Consultation fees range from 1,000 to 3,000 FC ($4 to $12) and one night in a hospital costs 2,500 FC ($10). Private hospitals can operate with inadequate equipment and sanitation and can charge high prices because the October 1973 government ruling on private medical care is too lax, the reporter wrote. Government health inspectors visit hospitals once a year.

Ndembiyembe quoted three private doctors: One was thoroughly happy with the present situation -- he is rich -- and the two others complained that only 20 per cent of the population go to physicians and 80 per cent to witch doctors; they said private medical care would improve only if private businesses help build decent hospitals. "If we don't receive private backing, we will keep things going the way it is now, and we will have fun making a fortune," one doctor said. The reporter concluded by suggesting that the government should equalize the cost of medical care nationwide and efficiently check on the prices and quality of private care.

Ndembiyembe makes his point but obviously the public for whom he writes is not the public lacking adequate medical care. He analyzes a major issue with considerable detachment. He says consultation fees range from 1,000 to 3,000 FC but he
fails to say that the average Cameroonian worker earns about 34,200 FC ($136) a month. Also, most Cameroonians eat what they grow; only about 65,000 earn wages.

One can understand why 80 per cent of the people consult witch doctors, especially since witch doctors accept goods or services as payment.

Next to Ndembiyembe's report is a news story headlined "Le Gouvernement Montre Beaucoup de Sollicitude pour la Santé des Populations" (The Government Shows Lots of Concern for the Cameroonians' Health). The story tells about the opening of a public hospital in an average-size town -- population 7,000. It explains why the hospital was established and describes its facilities. The story seems to be placed alongside Ndembiyembe's report to temper possible criticism of the government. The Cameroon Tribune always describes the government as fulfilling the people's needs.

The reporting is not aggressive because the role of the national daily differs from the role of Western newspapers; the Cameroonian daily represents an affluent, educated minority that is not all pro-government but does not like social scandals and claims, Breteuil explained.

Evembe said: "In Cameroon people are just learning to live and act in a democratic society." Certainly, educated Cameroonians are concerned with social reforms, but they try

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to achieve them at their level; in 1974 the common people had no right to speak for themselves and display their scars. Ndembiyembe quoted doctors but not patients.

When the common people happen to make the news, their side is not represented in the newspaper. On July 3, 1974, the employes of the national railway in Douala went on strike for a day and a half; they asked for better wages and removal of a local railway director. When Cameroon Tribune reporters investigated the strike, the workers were not the ones to explain the reasons for and results of the strike.9

The point that the strike was illegal is stressed in the report. Ministry of Transportation officials, frequently quoted, said the workers had no right to strike without notifying their union, L'Union Nationale des Travailleurs Camerounais, and they should have waited for a court settlement. Officials also said the workers went on strike only because they did not know what the government had done and planned to do to improve their condition.

The entire page devoted to an "informative" study of the strike actually describes why the strike was wrong. This statement precedes the strike in depth report: "In order to accomplish its purpose which is to inform, explain and educate, Cameroon Tribune presents to its readers the

strike dossier. This presentation is of course purely informative. The strike has ended, to the satisfaction of all Cameroonians. Starting this morning, trains run on schedule on all lines."

The newspaper claims objectivity, yet the reporters failed to interview railway workers, who are described as irresponsible, impetuous, misinformed and a threat to the public's welfare. The article ends with a quote from a union official, who asserts that the government consented to most of the workers' demands.

It seems as if Ngog-Hob's policy is to present a solution with each investigative report and the problems it raises. The government is presented as an almighty benefactor who watches out and provides for everybody. In short, an elite plans the development of Cameroon and the majority should toil and keep quiet.

Evenbe explained why he thinks the common people are ignored by the Cameroon Tribune: "In the news media we must avoid talking about the type of class struggles which fill up the European media in order to maintain the traditions of our country. In Africa it is a hierarchy of tribes' chiefs and top families who lead the population and dispense justice."

Other Regular Coverage

The Cameroon Tribune prints feature stories and sometimes a women's page describing, for example, the best way to shop economically, make balanced meals and keep food from
spoiling. 10 Other stories concern fine arts and literature, such as the review of four books by Olumpe Bhely Quenum and an interview with the author. 11 Feature stories focus on Africa or Cameroon.

The hard news is generally a summary of official ceremonies, openings of public buildings and meetings of official agencies in each province. While Cameroon Times reports crimes and accidents in the English-speaking community, Cameroon Tribune emphasizes the activities of officials and never reports crimes despite the frequency of robberies and assaults. 12

In Cameroon the role of the daily seems to be to make people smile, hope for a better future, and forget about planning a coup. The only bad news concerns incidents of national interest. Ngog-Hob seems to be trying to prove that no problem baffles the government, and that everything is taken care of. It would appear that everything is well in the best of all possible Cameroons -- a proposition that baffles the tourist.

The editing staff usually devotes one page to international and national sports news, two pages to international


12 Many robberies occur in Cameroon. Convicted robbers usually receive the death penalty.
news and one page to movie schedules, a cross-word puzzle, a comic strip and the daily horoscope.

The Cameroon Tribune cannot be judged by Western standards because it represents an African society. There is no dialogue between readers and editors. It is hard to believe that the editor receives no letters, but rarely is one published.

The readers' apparent silence is matched by the editor's muteness: Cameroon Tribune never carries editorials on controversial subjects. The "editorials" in Cameroon Tribune are more like philosophical arguments. One, for example, praised the virtues of dialogue illustrated by a new peace treaty between Mali and Upper-Volta.13 Another said: "Only an effective act of consciousness of our eminently revolutionary task of building the new Promised Land will make each citizen the irrepressible yeast of our emergence."14

Ngog-Hob suppresses exchanges between the public and the editorial staff. The newspaper is not an instrument of dialogue. The reader does not participate in the flow of information; his thinking is not represented in the reporter's work.

Cameroon Tribune Weekly

Ngog-Hob is also the weekly's editor. Interviewed


in April 1974, he said he hoped *Cameroon Tribune* in English would soon become a daily, but in January 1975, it still came out Wednesdays. Its circulation varies from 2,500 to 5,000, compared with the 5,000 to 8,000 circulation of the tri-weekly *Cameroon Times*.

Comparable in size and make-up to the daily, the weekly *Cameroon Tribune* differs in content, for it reports news selected by the English staff for English-speaking Cameroonians. The staff also does the type of investigative reporting that appeals to English Cameroonians, because it is done from their point of view, not the government's.

The English staff adds some lively criticism to the excessive praise of the government by the other government media. Reporters ignore politics, but they argue about the government's social policy and attack the inefficiency of the administration. For example, in a story about the projected Yaoundé Central Hospital, reporter Jenkins Mote wrote: "The decision of the government to provide Yaoundé with a 1,080-bed hospital is indeed laudable. The problem here is that we fear this mammoth hospital will be difficult to manage. If the present 500-bed hospital poses such great problems (cleanliness, nurses, doctors, organization, equipment, skills) what of a 1,080-bed hospital? What is needed are devoted people who are encouraged, instead of spending their time, as at present, chasing through ministries to get their
Mote exposes the shortcomings of the present Yaoundé hospital and draws up a list of suggestions for the projected hospital. The report included a picture of a Yaoundé hospital room, which looks like a pigsty. To avoid a libel suit, Mote does not name anyone on the staff. At the end of the report, he recapitulates his suggested improvements and asks the government if the public hospitals in Yaoundé and Douala should not be de-nationalized so their services can be improved.

Mote's report has the characteristics of an editorial. He builds a well-documented case against the present Yaoundé hospital, and he calls for precise changes in the new hospital.

Otherwise, the weekly prints the same type of infrequent official editorials as the daily Cameroon Tribune, although the two newspapers have different policies concerning letters to the editor. The weekly prints a "letters to the editor" column, although irregularly. It also carries ads encouraging the readers to write: "Share your wealth of knowledge with everybody. Write to Cameroon Tribune now, tomorrow and the day after."  

The following letter is a critique of the weekly by a Mr. P.F. Fombin: "I salute the great Cameroon Tribune. I

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like *Cameroon Tribune* because of the neat and orderly presentation of information and because of the relatively mature use of English. But many issues have come out with no column for the readers' letters and one wonders if you could have not received letters worthy of publication. We cannot have you telling us all the time and we just passive readers [sic]. You could encourage the public to participate. Also I feel very strongly that a great newspaper should carry an editorial." Fombin also reproaches the paper for keeping "sealed lips" about crimes.17

The editor defended his policy in an answer to the letter. He explained that not many letters were printed because the readers did not write, and crime stories did not appear because the type of information generally is reported by unreliable sources -- meaning the public. The editor said he thought editorials "should only be published when an event necessitates them."18

The *Cameroon Tribune* in English also plays up community news and social movements. A large part of the regular coverage concerns, for example, women's seminars, Boy Scout meetings and meetings of Familia, an African organization to promote the family unit.

The English staff personalizes the news with headlines

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18 Editor's answer, *ibid.*
such as "Our Forests, A Big Asset," and "Re-enforcing Our Milk Supply," which in a way include the public in the news. Personalizing the news may become editorializing as indicated by the front page headlines "Acts of Fraternity," to summarize the news of agreements signed by Gabon and Cameroon, or "Green Light Flickers on Guinea-Bissau," meaning that this country soon may be granted independence.

The differences between the daily and weekly stem from the different social and educational backgrounds of French and English Cameroonians. For years, the 2 million English Cameroonians were left out of the government's plans for development and played the part of the poor parent. As a result, the weekly is directed to a non-affluent black public in the lower middle class and lower class and bears the influence of 42 years of British colonization.

However, both Cameroon Tribunes give much coverage to the good news of Cameroonian development. These typical good-news headlines appeared Aug. 14, 1974: "Insurance Measures for Workers," "More Attention to Employees' Problems," "Domestic Servants Not Forgotten," and "Tourism Improves in

\[ \begin{align*}
19 \text{Op. cit., p. 3, cols. 4-5.} \\
20 \text{Ibid., p. 2, cols. 4-5.} \\
21 \text{Ibid., p. 1, cols. 1-5.} \\
22 \text{Ibid., cols. 3-4.} \\
23 \text{Ibid., col. 5.} \\
24 \text{Ibid., p. 4, cols. 1-3.} \\
25 \text{Ibid., p. 2, cols. 4-5.}
\end{align*} \]
the North-West and South-West."²⁶

The two newspapers intermittently carry women's pages. The weekly is more democratic, because twothird's of its women's page is made up of articles written by readers. For example, a nursery-school teacher from Buea, Elisabeth Nkuku Nwigwe, wrote a satirical comment on men who look pregnant because they drink too much,²⁷ and a Mr. Perps Abea Ntche wrote a long description of the ideal wife: "The vitally important things in a wife in my view are intelligence, common sense and intuition."²⁸

Compared with the independent newspapers, both Cameroon Tribunes offer a better analysis and synthesis of national information and international news since the staff has the means, training and space to do so — both Cameroon Tribunes print 12 pages compared with four pages for the Cameroon Times and Le Courrier Sportif and six pages for La Gazette.

The faults of the daily and the weekly lie in heavy political editing and the dullness of many articles. Despite their shortcomings, the two Cameroon Tribunes are a great improvement over La Presse Du Cameroun, which would have failed and not been replaced if the Cameroonian government had not undertaken the daily and weekly. No private Cameroonian corporation could afford such a project.

CHAPTER IV

THE NEWS MEDIA IN AN EMERGING SOCIETY

The News Media Are a New Phenomenon
in the Cameroonian Society

When the Cameroonian tribes were ruled by feudal chiefs or kings, the primitive tribal culture included no news media. The tribes were isolated and lived in well-ordered worlds of their own with no contact with the outside except when they waged war. Each tribe spoke only its own dialect.

The European colonists implanted among the Cameroonian population a need for news media. Cameroonian journalists trained abroad have put out small-circulation newspapers since the 1950's. Fifteen years after independence, Cameroonians have improved their news media, within the limits of their economy, and have stepped from a pre-history culture into a post-colonial civilization.

The fact that news media are new, sustains the public's interest in the media. Lestapis said that when people argue, they often refer to newspapers to determine who is right. "People here believe that what is written is true," he explained.

Among African populations, the Cameroonian news media penetrate a population more prepared to receive them, because

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1Nothing was recorded, as proved by the African saying: "When an old man dies, it is a library which burns."
Cameroonian are generally better educated. Only 30 per cent of the population is illiterate, compared to more than 50 per cent in 97 per cent of African countries, Bourges wrote in *Réflexion sur le Role de la Presse en Afrique.*

The literacy level in Cameroon results from an efficient and national-wide educational system set up by the German colonists. Operated by Catholic and Protestant missions, the colonial school system was unmatched at the time in Africa for its criss-crossing of the entire territory. Missions still operate most of the Cameroonian high schools.

Cameroonian's life expectancy is 45, so most of the population is young and eager to adopt the devices of Western civilization, whether the mass media or the miniskirt.

**The Radio Audience**

Radio-Cameroon is technically the only mass medium. Despite the lack of data, radio listeners obviously outnumber newspaper readers for two reasons: it is impossible to distribute newspapers throughout Cameroon, while the radio broadcasts simultaneously reach the farmers in the mountains, the villages isolated in the rain forest and the street peddlers swarming in the cities; and the public is enthusiastic about the radio.

In the cities one hears radios everywhere. The street

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Bourges, *Le Role de la Presse*, p. 3.
tailor listens while he sews on the curb; people cluster around tinderbox bar-grocery shops to palaver — the African way of discussing things at great length -- and listen to high-tuned radios. The director of Havas Publicite, Jacques Duthion, explained that radios are everywhere, even in the bush; when a village chief owns a radio, he often places loud-speakers around the village so all the families can listen to the broadcasts.

The success of the Havas Publicite radio-advertising campaigns proves that Radio-Cameroon has a large audience and can be considered as a mass medium, Duthion said. The broadcasts in vernacular languages -- news and ads -- reach the 30 per cent of the Cameroonians who understand neither French nor English.

Amiot-Prisot said he estimates eight persons listen to each of the approximately 100,000 radio sets. If only about 800,000 listen, it is because the 5 million other Cameroonians cannot afford a radio. A small radio costs about 15,000 FC ($60), a little less than the average monthly salary.

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3 The French-owned Havas is the only advertising agency in Cameroon. It changed its name to Cameroon Publi-Expansion July 1, 1974, when the majority of its shares were sold to the Cameroonian government. J. Duthion and his staff operate the agency.

4 J. Duthion, interview May 1, 1974, in Douala. Further references refer to this interview.
The Newspaper Buyers

Newspaper readership is limited because newspapers are distributed mainly in a few urban areas owing to the lack of means of communication and because newspapers appeal to a cultured elite. In addition, buying a newspaper is a luxury the average Cameroonian cannot afford.

Distribution Problems

The six Cameroonian newspapers are printed in Yaoundé, Douala and Victoria. Buying one is easy in the city of publication, but elsewhere the distribution problem is acute. The French distribution agency Hachette handles the two Cameroon Tribunes and L'Effort. The other newspapers are distributed through bush taxis, "because Hachette does not sell on the streets, which limits the sales, and because the agency asks for a high commission," according to Gwellem.

The Cameroon Times is sold in the towns of Western Cameroon -- Victoria, Buea, Tiko, Bamenda -- and sometimes in Douala. La Gazette and Le Courrier Sportif cater to Douala and the nearby towns of the Littoral province.

Interviewed May 2, 1974, Jean Claude Roy, director of Hachette in Douala, said his firm could not provide adequate nationwide distribution of the two Cameroon Tribunes because the means of communication are inadequate. Roy explained that Hachette uses the national Cameroon Airline, trains, roads and the mail to distribute the newspapers, but "there
is one problem after another."\(^5\)

The Cameroon Airline is expensive because it does not have special tariffs for newspapers as most Western airlines have, he said. Newspapers are set at the same price as regular packages. The daily is not distributed every day in towns other than Yaoundé and Douala, since the mail reaches most provincial towns only four times a week. Interviewed in July 1974, de Breteuil said that at that time the daily *Cameroon Tribune* did not reach Douala regularly because it was the monsoon season and planes often were grounded.\(^6\)

Bush taxis are inexpensive but roads are hazardous all year. "We always risk using a driver who will forget the newspaper packages somewhere or will lose them," Roy said. Cameroon's 1,400 kilometers of asphalt roads and 20,000 kilometers of dirt roads always need repairs. It takes 15 hours to drive the 366 kilometers from Douala to Bafoussam.

Trains usually provide more regular deliveries than do the bush taxis, despite frequent derailments, Roy explained. There are 1,056 kilometers of railroad tracks in Cameroon. The track between Ngaoundere and Yaoundé is new, but the government neglected to repair the track between Yaoundé and

\(^5\) J.C. Roy, interview May 2, 1974, in Douala. Further references on pages 66 and 67 refer to this interview.

\(^6\) The monsoon season lasts from May to late September.
Douala and trains are derailed about three times a week between the two capitals, Roy said.

The North is the most poorly served province for distribution of newspapers, according to Roy. A package reaches the North in eight days, so the daily reaches the Northern towns and villages once a week.

Roy said Hachette would concentrate on ensuring the best possible distribution of Cameroon Tribune, but the only solution to the delivery problem would be a small fleet of delivery cars. However, Hachette in 1974 did not want to invest more money in its operation. Also the cars could reach only the towns easily accessible and close to the two capitals.

Hachette has 60 outlets in Douala and 15 in Yaoundé. Bookshops and small groceries, especially in the bush, sell the newspapers. Independent publishers rely mostly on street retailers in a few major towns. Bayemi uses Hachette, the Catholic missions and street retailers to distribute L'Effort.

Cultural and Financial Gap Between the Public and the Two National Newspapers

"In Africa the modern European-type newspapers reach a bourgeoisie that has rejected the African way of thinking and living to adopt a cross-bred mentality, half European and

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7 Roy said the Cameroonian government plans to buy a majority of the Hachette shares.
half American," de Breteuil said. Apparently few Cameroonians are among this élite. A French businessman who did not want to be identified said he thought the daily *Cameroon Tribune* was bought mostly by the 30,000 Europeans in Cameroon because Cameroonians had not responded to his advertising campaigns.

The Cameroonians who benefit from the national newspapers are the cross-bred élite interested in national news and news analysis and the Cameroonian journalists and technicians for whom the newspapers provide well-paid jobs after the government paid for their training.

The average Cameroonian cannot afford to subscribe to the daily at 40 FC (16 cents) an issue. The public prefers a meal to a newspaper, Gwellem said. The daily costs twice the price of an average meal of bread and fried fish or meat.

In June 1974, the 60,158 Cameroonians employed by the government earned an average monthly salary of 17,000 FC ($68). Family ties being strong, the salaried member is expected to support about 20 relatives. In those circumstances, it is not in the scale of values for the average Cameroonian to buy the daily. He usually is thrilled by the news media, but he relies on the radio or on cheaper small-circulation newspapers like *Cameroon Times*, *La Gazette* and *Le Courrier Sportif*.

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8 This figure is constant. If French companies are Africanized, French technicians come to help the government with the new oil production and agricultural projects.

9 Interview, May 6, 1974, in Douala.
The independent newspapers cost about 10 cents and can compete advantageously with Radio-Cameroon because no station reports the community-type news and gossip they print. Also, Cameroon Times is published every other day, La Gazette twice weekly and Le Courrier Sportif weekly, which means fewer issues to buy.

Bayemi said a poll by a French institute of statistics in 1964 indicated 20 Cameroonians read each copy of a newspaper.
CHAPTER V

THE JOURNALISTS' PROBLEMS

The News Media Income

Practicing journalism in Cameroon is not profitable. And it is a lonely job, a solitary struggle in a morass of geographical and economic hindrances and restrictive government policies.

Cameroonian news media actually are nonprofit businesses. Small-circulation newspapers can barely pay expenses. The national news media probably operate at a loss and the State Treasury probably balances the budgets of the two Cameroon Tribunes and Radio-Cameroon.

The Cameroonian government expects from the national news media the same type of "profit" that the U.S. government expects from the space programs. The founding of national news media by the government was a sizable, venturesome operation necessary for the social progress of Cameroon, but reaping no immediate and direct profit. Moudjih and Ngog-Hob run a business somewhere between a nonprofit public service and a propaganda network.

According to Duthion, Radio-Cameroon, with its large audience, could make a profit from advertising revenue only if the staff broadcast more commercials and did it carefully and professionally. Asunkioan, director of Radio-Buea, did not
know whether advertisements would enable him to balance his budget because he and the other radio directors never have tried to finance the stations with advertising revenue. Asunkioan does not know how much money is made from advertisements, the payments are made directly to the State Treasury. He agreed with Duthion's statement that ads could finance Radio-Cameroon, especially since the ad market would be enlarged when the national publicity agency, Cameroon Public-Expansion, began operating July 1974 and enabled Cameroonians who want to advertise to do so.

The financial future of the Cameroon newspapers is not encouraging. The independent publishers' only income is from advertising and the competition is stiff because few businesses advertise.

Bayemi, Gwellem and Jong complained that Havas gave most of its ads to the French daily La Presse du Cameroun. There is a war between the French and Cameroonian interests, Bayemi said. For example, Havas Afrique kept the ad make-up proofs that the Guiness beer company\(^1\) intended to have published in L'Effort in 1974: "I had to go myself to the Havas office to be given the ad make-up proofs."

Independent publishers resort to door-to-door ad selling. Bayemi, for example, made 2,220,000 FC ($8,880) in 1973 by

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\(^1\)Guiness firm is one of Cameroon's major businesses.
canvassing and 300,000 FC ($1,200) from Havas.

The Cameroon Times is financed entirely by advertisements, Gwellem said. "Three fourths of the ads are obtained by us going out and one fourth through Havas."

Bayemi said he hoped Cameroon Publi-Expansion would be fair to all Cameroonian interests, but Lestapis thought Radio-Cameroon and the Cameroon Tribunes would get most of the advertising business. Lestapis said ads in the Cameroon Tribunes would cost twice as much as they did in La Presse du Cameroun and because the budgets of the few companies that advertise cannot be increased, the national newspapers will take most of the ads.

However, both Cameroon Tribunes carry a low percentage of ads. Ads in the 12-page daily fill the same space as the ads in the four-page Cameroon Times.

Publishing an independent newspaper under such unfavorable economic conditions becomes an act of faith rather than an act of business. "The government won't stop us from publishing because we are free and they cannot compete with us or be a threat to our existence," Gwellem stated.

The Media Operating Costs

The fact that Cameroon is an emerging country is important in considering the operating cost of the news media. Cameroon produces none of the equipment and raw materials required by the media. Publishers and radio directors must
import everything they need and must manage despite the inflationary world economy and the international paper shortage. Most of Cameroon's resources are exported, and the finished products imported to Cameroon become more and more expensive. The Cameroonian who buys an imported finished product, such as printing equipment or paper, pays for shipping the raw material, its transformation, the salary of foreign workers, the return of the finished product and maybe an import tax. Bayemi complained that the government import tax on paper is illegal according to UNESCO-sponsored international agreements; in Nigeria—bordering Western Cameroon—there is no such tax.

All independent newspapers are printed on cylinder presses bought second-hand in Europe, dismantled and rebuilt in Cameroon, Lestapis said. The La Presse de Cameroun press was used in England before World War II. Replacement parts also must be imported. Only Ngog-Hob can afford the rates of the AGRACAM offset press to print the Cameroon Tribunes.

Cameroonian publishers import paper from Europe and have a hard time getting it. Gwellem said his comes from Amsterdam. The Cameroonian government is financing construction of a paper mill.

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Timber and minerals are among Cameroon's principal exports.
Journalists Need to Unite

The quality and durability of the independent newspapers depend usually on one man's efforts. To balance their budgets, the publishers must operate at an artisan's level. They are all jacks-of-all-trades who combine the functions of publisher, editor, business manager, reporter and copywriter. Gwellem employs 15 persons including clerical staff, but he himself writes a large percentage of the Cameroon Times' four pages. He signs all the editorials, answers the public's letters and signs a one-page piece of reporting in each issue (usually personal experiences). He also adapts articles from Cameroonian or foreign newspapers.

Bayemi said two reporters help him put out the weekly 16-page Effort Camerounais. They give him their copy and he does the rest of the work. Jong writes and makes up Le Courrier Sportif. He has no reporters -- only sports fans who send him information about events they attend.

Many Cameroonians are interested in starting a newspaper, but they often find the work too hard. Mongoué, the Reuters correspondent, said he started a weekly, La Semaine Camerounaise after independence; it was discontinued in 1970 after 10 years of struggle.

Too many unshared responsibilities discourage Cameroonian journalists. For example, Bayemi complained about the loneliness of his job: "Everyone of us is isolated. We have no press centers where we could meet and exchange ideas and information."
When I want to meet privately with such or such a journalist, I have to go to his house. We would like to set up a friendly association which would not be a union and thus would not be politically oriented and labeled as opposition, so we would have a place to discuss the problems we have in common."

Lestapis reached the same conclusion. He said journalism is not regarded as a respectable occupation because journalists have no union or association to represent and defend them. Also, they are not officially recognized, for they have no press cards or other identification and protection.

In 1974 it was impossible to set up a union or association of Cameroonian journalists because those who are also government employes -- working for ACAP, both Cameroon Tribunes, Radio-Cameroon and the Ministry of Information -- cannot legally join any association other than the nation syndicate which comprises all Cameroonian workers. Government journalists cannot join a supranational association.

Bayemi and other independent journalists tried to set up an independent association with Bayemi as business secretary. Every member was supposed to give one per cent of his salary to the association, Bayemi said. However, the government has not officially registered it because the two government employes in charge of the investigation of this association have failed to do so for two years: "Also, our association does not have the support of our English-speaking colleagues because they were used to greater freedom when Cameroon was a
British colony and they cannot stand the restrictions imposed on our association and consequently its lack of efficiency."

Gwellem said: "The government sees journalists, especially independent ones, only as trouble makers."

According to Lestapis, "It's monstrous to be a journalist here."

However, journalists might improve their status and be able to cooperate, Bayemi said. The government already has urged all Cameroonian sports writers to join the Union of African Sports Journalists. It was a step forward for these journalists to join a supranational association, and Bayemi said all African journalists soon may be united in the association that was formed at an assembly in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, in November 1974. Bayemi added: "The Cameroonian general secretary of the Ministry of Information said we would be allowed to join this African union of journalists when it meets in Yamousoukro, Ivory Coast, some months after it is created in Abidjan." Uniting could help journalists turn in their favor "a whole world opposed to them," Bayemi said.

The 15 Cameroonian 1974 ESIJY graduates working for both Cameroon Tribunes earn 125,000 FC ($550) monthly, but the independent publishers seem to have little to live on.

Gwellem, a renowned figure in African journalism, lives in a

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3 Gwellem was invited to represent Cameroonian journalists at a week-long seminar of African journalists in Nairobi, Kenya in August 1974 and spent a week there.
dirt-floor house with no modern conveniences.

Bayemi said journalists need all the help they can get in Cameroon. They need a lot of money just for transportation and phone service. Without it, they cannot properly gather information and distribute newspapers.
CHAPTER VI

L'ECOLE SUPERIEURE INTERNATIONALE DE JOURNALISME DE YAOUNDE (ESIJY)

The School

The creation of ESIJY April 17, 1970, was the most positive step the government had taken to improve the Cameroonian news media. Students get practical journalism training paid for by the government.

"ESIJY can change the whole media operation in Cameroon," Herve Bourges, director of the school, said. Bourges sums up the responsibilities of modern African journalists in three propositions: Describe in a news context the social, economic and cultural situation of which knowledge is essential to all militants for development; inform their country of certain facts or improvements that are part of the general effort for development; and participate directly in development by making the public responsive to education.

The curriculum is divided equally between theory and practical experience of journalism as practiced in Africa. Students take field trips and live with a tribe for a week to investigate local issues and the way of life. The results of such investigations are reported in a bi-monthly stenciled bulletin prepared by the journalism students.

ESIJY was founded jointly by Cameroon, Rwanda, the
Central African Republic, Gabon, Chad and Togo. It offers classes in French and English and it combines the features of college school and trade school.

ESIJY students are graduated with the equivalent of a master's degree in journalism after two years of taking classes and practicing journalism in Cameroon and one year of work and study in France and Canada. They are guaranteed jobs, because the school accepts only as many students as needed by the six countries that founded ESIJY. Each year the governments determine the personnel needs of their media, and that number is accepted after taking ESIJY's selective entrance exam.

For example, in 1970 Togolese representatives said they would need five journalists in 1974, so five Togolese were selected from those who took the entrance exam in June 1970. When they were graduated in 1974, they found jobs immediately as did the 20 other graduates.

Thirty-five applicants were accepted from 350 who took the exam in July 1973, Bourges said. Applicants must have a high school diploma or two years of professional experience in journalism. A student's country pays for his studies in Cameroon and the last year in France and Canada when he takes classes taught by local journalists and works for the news media.

Thirty-five second-year students and 33 first-year students were attending ESIJY in April 1974. Twenty-five
completed their work and study abroad. The enrollment included three women. A student must maintain the equivalent of a B average and no student is allowed to repeat a course.

Yaoundé is a good location for ESIJY because the 4,100-student university created in 1961 "is now well rooted in the environment," Bourges said. There are five permanent ESIJY professors. Professors from other university departments teach history, political science and other subjects at ESIJY.

"Our curriculum is a symbiosis between abstracts and technical teaching," Bourges said. "The students learn to adapt the media to the needs of their countries and to face the realities of their day-to-day job. We teach them how to explain the news to the public because there is currently a barrier between what the journalists print or broadcast and what the population understands."

The Future of the Cameroonian News Media

ESIJY should spur development of the Cameroonian news media. The school is a state monopoly but the students are not brainwashed. ESIJY is state-funded, but the government has no direct control over the education and training of the students, especially since they experience working for free news media for a year in Canada and France. Moreover, the Cameroonian government holds no specific political ideology to instill in them. The students are recruited on the basis of accomplishment and work their way through the three-year
program.

Once the young journalist is graduated and practices his profession, he must deal with government directives. It is assumed that since he was not previously indoctrinated, he can respond as a free, educated human being to such restrictions.

The issue of development is forced on Cameroonians with no choice other than civil war, poverty and hunger. Cameroon must help itself. The real restraint on the ESIJY graduates' freedom and objectivity stems from the awareness that they have a crucial role in the development and unity of their country, because they are educated persons who know how to use the powerful news media for the cause of progress. All leaders in politics or other fields carry the same burden of social involvement, and they still aspire to moral honesty and objectivity.

It is up to the ESIJY graduates to start applying the ethic of press freedom to their social involvement; by doing so they would ally the techniques of a development-conscious Cameroon Tribune staff and the free critical spirit of Gwellem, Bayemi, Jong and the people who help them. The fact that French and English Cameroonian journalism students work together at ESIJY certainly will help them build their professional careers on the concepts of social responsibility and freedom of speech.

"Our press system is undefined as yet," Evembe said.
"We are creating a canvas, but we have not found the basic formula for our news media." Twenty years have passed since the French colonists endowed Cameroon with a cylinder press and a newspaper. Let us remember that the Western world took five centuries to build and support a free press after Gutenberg invented movable type. Cameroonians were as dum-founded when whites showed them wheelbarrows. 'The first Europeans who had natives use wheelbarrows saw them load the wheelbarrows and carry them on their heads,' French old-timers in Cameroon say."

After 20 years, Cameroonians have succeeded in creating and running their own news media. From what Evembe said, they still do not know where they are heading, but they are on the way, I hope toward freer and more useful news media. "In Cameroon we have put all our chips on the news media," Evembe said. The news media fulfill the double purpose of having the nation know about itself and be conscious of its unity. Also, the media contribute to formation of an active public opinion.

Cameroonians who read the newspapers or listen to the radio are more likely to think of Cameroon as a nation instead of an agglomerate of belligerent tribes, especially as they are informed about world problems that affect their lives, such as the sugar shortage, the oil-price increase, inflation, etc. The flow of news should set off a flow of thinking and maybe some positive action by a socially and
politically activated public.

The news media always have been a keystone on which nations built their democracy. Given time, some economic prosperity and continuation and improvement of the news media, Cameroonian can build a democracy.
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