

The Myth Of Objectivity

as a part. *Le Devoir* is the voice of a group of conservative nationalist Quebec intellectuals. AFP a thoroughly established news agency in a position similar to that of AP in the United States CP in this country.

It is to suggest only that in approaching his subject matter in an analytical and non-objective way, the AP reporter has written a fairer story than his AP counterpart. By not pretending to be objective, he has given his readers a more accurate picture of objective reality.

The group

And yet the myth that North American news writing is objective still survives, and the use of the pyramid style helps foster it.

The reason it survives is that it is useful to the newspaper owners. For North America differs from Europe in that all its major newspapers are owned by one section of society. In Europe, the newspapers are frankly a political tool. There are newspapers representing communist parties, socialist parties, liberal parties and conservative parties. There is even a business-backed press and a labor-backed press.

The Beaverbrooke papers in Britain are as reactionary as anything in Canada the United States. But the Labour Party's *Daily Mirror* could run a photo of the American moon landing, in 1969, with the caption "From the people who brought you Vietnam..." And the British Communist Party publishes a highly respected daily newspaper, *Morning Star*.

There is no such variety on this

continent. Our English language daily papers are divided between the Liberal and Conservative papers, but there is not one that supports the NDP. Not one.

In the United States even within that system it is consistently Republican, while the people stubbornly continue to elect Democratic Congresses and even, occasionally, Democratic presidents.

The main characteristics of the North American newspaper market is that there is a small number of sellers. It is what economists call an oligarchic market.

In addition, it is steadily becoming more of one, since the number of independent publishers is declining as some newspapers go bankrupt and others are bought out by the chains.

How oligarchies function is described by the economist Donald Eldon: "... A number of factors may lead commonly to the emergence of a 'group' relationship among sellers in an oligopolistic market... Oligopolies fail to act independently like sellers in a perfectly competitive market, and instead function more as a group in the sociological sense, with common aims and norms particular to that group." (Eldon, *The Oligarchy Problem in Competition Policy*, background study to the Interim Report on Competition Policy, Economic Council of Canada, 1970, pp. 10-12).

In the newspaper business, this has implications for more than just the publishers' commercial practices. It also has a direct bearing on the content of their newspapers. Often they will campaign with a vigorous and united voice on issues that directly affect their interests as newspaper publishers.

Perhaps the clearest example of this

occurred a couple of years ago during a strike at the Ottawa *Citizen*. The Ottawa *Journal*, although the strike was in its interest as a supposed competitor of the *Citizen*, published editorials denouncing the union and supporting the *Citizen* management.

Even more often, the content of their papers will be affected by their interests as members of a wider class of rich men. As A.J. Liebling wrote in his classical work *The Press* (Ballantine Books, New York, 1961):

"The 'taxpayer' is always 'overburdened', but it occurs to me as I write that he is always represented as a small, shabby man in underclothes and a barrel (the kind of fellow who, if he had a wife, two children, and no imagination, would be caught for an income tax of about eight dollars) and never be as an unmistakably rich man, like, say the proprietor of a large newspaper.

"The man in the barrel is always warned that a frivolous project like medical care for his aged parents is likely to double his already crushing tax burden. The implication of this is that the newspaper is above worrying about his parents, and of course, he is - because the old man left him the paper." (Liebling, op. cit., pp. 75-76).

Objective?

This is the press we are told is objective in its news page. If the press were openly biased, and a means of expressing a point of view, then it would be clearly unfair that the entire press should express only one viewpoint, or at best, a narrow range of viewpoints. Therefore we can't admit that it is biased.

We must say it is owned by the Communist Party, the Canadian Labour of Congress, or Lord Thompson of Fleet.

It is 'objective' to write a story on a death with political overtones using only police sources. It is 'objective' to report at face value the ranting of an MP - all the while knowing that public figures in general, and MP's in particular, say everything they say with the next edition or hourly newscast in mind.

The reporter simply lets the events pass through him onto the pages of the newspaper; he is a sieve. Jack Cahill, Ottawa bureau chief of the *Toronto Star* and an unshakeable exponent of the reporter as sieve theory, has said: "I have no opinions."

But of course, Cahill does have opinions; what he really means is that his opinions can easily be reconciled with those of Beland Honderich, who owns the newspaper he works for. Other reporters have opinions too, and not all of them are in the same happy position of Cahill. Some of them disagree with their publishers, and come to realize that in writing pyramid style and objective news they are helping to perpetuate something in which they can't believe.

People working on alternative and student newspapers tend to be particularly critical of the pyramid style and objectivity. This attitude is well-founded, but there is a caveat to be noted here.

The pyramid is so dangerous precisely because it is so extremely effective. It can be used by others besides the large newspapers and their allies. To believe in the pyramid as an ideal is self-delusion, but to reject it as a tool is self-indulgence. If the goal is to communicate information, both are to be avoided.

ANGOLA

over 1950's - a period in African nationalism was able through to create the illusion that all was well. Other than protests and cultural group activities no major events until 1961.

Rebels Begin

er 1960, producers refused to pay. In response to this, Portugal in military force conducted a mass operation against the largely Portuguese-speaking Bobim killed as many as 100 Africans. The Portuguese were just being several Portuguese in Luanda on February 1, 1961. In response, a massacre of the natives in Angola.

ch 15, northern Angola. Roberto, who of the FNLA staged a mass rebellion, on defeated and the FNLA set up a

provisional revolutionary government in exile.

From that moment up till last year's day of independence, Portugal was continually at war against the nationalist groups in Angola. During 1964-66, the MPLA set up the main base of its operation in Zambia and eastern Angola.

The third main liberation group, UNITA, was formed by Jonas Savimbi who had split from the FNLA. UNITA first surfaced in 1966 when 500 of its followers attacked the frontier town of Teixeira. Its main base is amongst the Ovimbundu tribe who make up about 33% of the Angolan population.

In 1967 The Organization of African Unity called for the unification of all three groups.

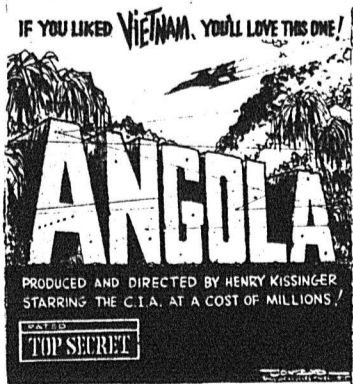
American Involvement

Throughout the history of Portugal's wars in Africa, the United States provided over \$350 million worth of military aid to that country. While announcing itself as a friend of democratic rule and self-determination, the US government sustained the reactionary and unpopular Salazar and Caetano dictatorships in Portugal - thereby helping Portugal maintain control over its colonial empire.

American interest was more than just a reaction to the cold war of that time. Angolan oil and mineral deposits were discovered in the early 1960's.

Gulf and Esso quickly developed heavy investments. The American banking community (in specific, Rockefeller's Chase Manhattan Bank) through its holdings in South Africa became directly involved.

Portugal's African wars eventually sparked an internal crisis within its own borders. The major wing of Portuguese finance capital, under the leadership of General Spínola realized that continuation of the massive military expenditures necessary to maintain control of its colonies would undermine the very economic system of Portugal. Through the old direct repression they could no longer dominate their colonies or their own working class. They launched a coup in April 1974 to modernize Portuguese capitalism - opting for a neo-colonial solution in the colonies and liberalization at home. They miscalculated, and a massive upsurge at home unleashed a pre-revolutionary situation. At



Conrad/Los Angeles Times

the same time in Angola a campaign for total independence rapidly gained momentum.

Before the April coup, unlike Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau where major gains took place, in Angola only sporadic clashes and a few strikes occurred. The Lisbon coup altered the situation - as the prospects of independence increased, broad sections of the Angolan population including those from the cities were drawn into opposition to Portuguese control.

Spínola called for a federation of the three liberation groups and Portugal, and for a referendum on independence to be held in the future. The Portuguese government (Armed Forces Movement - MFA) was forced to backtrack further and announced the date for independence.

The disunity and rivalry of the Angolan nationalist groups gave Portugal an opportunity to decide how the former colony should be governed. In October 1974 a ceasefire was signed with all three groups. On January 5, 1975, under pressure from the OAU, a formal unity of MPLA, FNLA and UNITA was worked out. They signed accords agreeing to form a coalition regime with a Portuguese high commissioner included to arbitrate disputes. An "Angolan National Army" was to be set up - with Portugal having the majority of forces.

Coalition Fails

The agreement on the coalition regime, by legitimizing the presence of the colonial army, gave Portugal a strong

hand in influencing the transition to formal independence. Lisbon was able to see which of the three groups would be most effective in administering a formally independent state within the capitalist system. Lisbon was able to maximize rivalries of the three groups and thereby weaken all of them.

Armed clashes began to occur between the MPLA and UNITA in Luanda in February and late in April. Over 1000 deaths resulted from these incidents. Each group tried to eliminate each others' troops from the areas it controlled. On June 9, Portuguese forces actively intervened by attacking troops of both the FNLA and MPLA.

Many of the clashes that have occurred between the three groups have not necessarily taken place with the leadership's knowledge or authority. Consequently on August 29 Portugal suspended all independence agreements and dissolved the coalition government.

Since the 1960's, the MPLA and FNLA have received aid from the Soviet Union and China respectively. FNLA besides its support from China has received assistance from US sources and Zaire. UNITA appears to be getting help from South Africa, China and US.

There is no consensus about the nature of this conflict. This is reflected in the interpretation of the Angolan situation by leftist political groups on campus at U of A. While all seem to support the concept of Angolan independence, there are many ideas as to who is

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