

Book Review

Contemporary Issues in Mass Media for Development and National Security, Edited by **Ralph A. Akinfeleye**.

Published in 1988 by Unimedia Publishing Limited, Price 30.

This is a collection of articles, three of which were read at the International Communication Conference at the University of Maiduguri, Nigeria, in 1987. It is divided into six sections, namely, mass media and national security, communication policy and national development, media education perspective, communication law, ethics and responsibility, international communication and, finally, culture and technology.

In section one dealing with mass media and national security, Inspector General Mohammadu Gambo, examines the limitations of the mass media in dealing with crime and suggests some solutions; Emmanuel Akpan suggests that television programmers should ensure that their programmes do not explicitly or implicitly abet crime; while Ikenna Nzimiro argues that for Nigeria to join the technological age, its leadership must first fully acknowledge the importance of information and education.

In the chapter on communication policy and national development, Ralph Akinfeleye calls for the restructuring, harmonizing, and rationalization of communication channels and instruments so as to make them reflect the developmental needs and modes of Nigeria. And in another article titled 'Mass communication Education and Human Resources in Nigeria: Problems and Prospects', he cites inadequate teaching staff, accommodation and text books, as well as large classes, outdated communication infrastructure, and poor salaries among the major problems plaguing media training in Nigeria.

John C. Merrill discusses the history of academic development of international communication. He traces the changes that have taken place since the 1950s when international communication was introduced into college and university curricula and acknowledges that although much has been achieved, there still remains much room for its teaching at the undergraduate level. In a second article titled 'Three Theories of the Press, Responsibility and the Advantages of Pluralistic Individualism', he argues that responsibility of the press as individually defined within the U.S. system is the only one which is in real accord with American social values and goals.

Prince Tony Momoh, Nigeria's Minister of Information, discusses Nigeria's press laws from 1909—1984, while Ikenna Nzimiro addresses the issue of government press relations. He submits that the press should avoid sycophants and purge itself of praise-mongers, flatterers and opportunists. A U.S. diplomat, Bruce Koch, examines the right to know under the U.S. Constitution and submits that it is the duty of American governments to protect the people's access to information and its dissemination.

Professor Merrill has a third article, this time in the chapter dealing with international communication. He acknowledges the positive developments that have proceeded from dialogues on New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO). Patricia Sharpe, an American journalist, vigorously defends Western coverage of Third World events, saying that it is not any more biased or negative than its coverage of the Western world.

In a comparative analysis of media-government relations in Nigeria, the U.S.A. and Britain, Ikechukwu Nwosu finds that in all the three countries, the government—media relations are not perfect. However, the relations are better in the U.S.A., followed by Britain and then Nigeria.

Komia Domatob traces the development of international entertainment and discusses the falacy of free flow of information and its ramifications for Third World situations. In an article titled 'Freedom and Authority in International Journalism',

Professor John Merrill says that universally journalistic freedom comes in three forms: state freedom, press freedom, and individual freedom. Des Wilson makes a strong case for traditional communication systems whose role, he says, is unassailable in the effort to achieve national cohesion.

Yemi Daramola, in a critical analysis of corporate advertising in Nigeria, underscores the importance of acquiring accurate data on audiences, harnessing research, and organizing conferences, seminars, symposia and workshops to up-date knowledge and skills in the field. He also suggests the allocation of more funds to advertising agencies as a strategy for improving the trade.

Finally, Emmanuel Akpan, in another article on traditional theatre, makes a case for devising ways of retaining television audiences and attracting new ones. He says that modernization of traditional theatre through a mass communication approach demands understanding of the grammar and syntax of the modern media and preparing theatrical programmes accordingly.

A major flaw of this book are the numerous typographical errors which could have been easily avoided through meticulous proof-reading. Besides, some sentences are too long. Curiously, chapter six which should have been on the role of communication in social change discusses something else media education:

Nonetheless, this book addresses an important theme. The contributions by individual authors constitute significant additions to the literature on major communication issues. Being acknowledged authorities in their subject areas, the appearance of these authors within one cover gives this publication the pride of place in the library of students and scholars of mass communication and development.

*Jerry Komia Domatob,
Department of Mass Communication,
University of Maiduguri, Nigeria.*

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Compiled by Rahab Gatura*

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* Mrs. Rahab Gatura is the documentalist at the ACCE/ICDR Headquarters, Nairobi, Kenya.

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Kasoma, Francis P. (1986). *The Press in Zambia*, Lusaka: Multimedia Publications.

Ugboajah, Frank O. (1986). 'Communication as Technology in African Rural Development' *Africa Media Review*. Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 1-19.

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Editorial Note: We regret any inconveniences caused by the change in type face in this Issue.

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