

MEDIA

Radio Controlled

so distracted they often mistake the trivial for the vital and ignore the issues that affect them most.

A deteriorating public educational system, further crippled by devastating budget cutbacks, leaves the new generation largely ignorant of the world around them and bereft of the skills to participate in the democratic process.

Furthermore, politics has fallen into such ill-repute that otherwise thoughtful and conscientious citizens tune out the larger debate, hoping

they will be insulated from its destructive effects. Yet their silence assures that the outcome will not be to their benefit.

Corporate control of the US broadcast media, long a fact of life in television and the print media, is now threatening to engulf and last remaining independent outlets in both commercial and public radio.

The Republican-led Congress is seeking to drive the diverse voices still heard on public radio into a narrow mould of corporate group-think by cutting off a federal

funding over the next three years.

Meanwhile, the new Telecommunications Act, crafted by lobbyists and heavily influenced by a mutually profitable partnership between House Speaker Newt Gingrich and media magnate Rupert Murdoch, smoothers the way for the formation of ever-larger communications conglomerates, including unlimited foreign ownership of domestic media outlets.

Despite these obstacles, progressive voices are determined to be heard. And many are persuaded that for all its deficiencies, talk-radio is one of the new places left where it might still be possible to break into a main-

stream debate from which most independent voices have been locked out in recent years.

For while editorial censors guard the gates of nearly every editorial page and TV studio these days, for the moment talk radio remains a freewheeling phenomenon.

Whether progressive succeed in penetrating the medium and reopening the debate to new points of view will be one of the true tests of the durability of US democracy in an age of increasing intolerance.

MARK SOMMER is a research associate in the Peace and Conflict Studies Programme at the University of California, Berkeley.

African TV Begins to Show in

claims to cure impotence, return run-away lovers and solve marital problems.

Another production, Somalia — The Price of Peace, about the brutal killing of four journalists by gunmen in Somalia at the peak of the civil strife, was snatched up again by Channel Four. The programme won an award at the Geneva Film Festival in Switzerland.

In July, BBC-2 started running another Afro Wisdom Films series, African Political Broadcast, short talks by contemporary African personalities and politicians. Subjects interviewed ranged from ex-president Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia, Nigerian writer Wole Soyinka, former

rebel prime minister of Rhodesia Ian Smith and President Meles Zenawi of Ethiopia.

The producers are busy selling ideas to more British television stations and are winning contracts. In the medium league of producers, with annual turn-over of more than £100,000, Afro Wisdom Films is growing steadily. Programmes on British issues could be made for African television by producers like Shewa, but so far this has seldom happened.

He says: "There is a lot to film in Britain for our African stations. I would like to expose many British shortcomings and dispel their myth that Britain is heaven on earth."

There are, for example, probably more people sleeping on the streets of London than there are in Lagos or Accra. All this stuff makes good documentaries for African television.

Money and politicians in Africa are prohibiting factors, he believes.

"Firstly it's expensive to make a good production in Britain because of the state-of-the-art video technology that is used. And you can't pass on the expenses to African stations because many of them don't afford the programmes.

"Then come politicians who have hijacked television to achieve personal goals. Public money that should buy such productions ends up paying for party political related propaganda or something similar. That's our problem."

"Until such time as Africa television goes private and operates professionally and profitably it remains a sad story," said Shewa, warning that United States companies like CNN — the Cable News Network — will continue to dominate the African television airwaves "because we are reluctant to do our own thing. In some countries however, yes, the money to do something is available. For example, in Cameroon the government gets television licence fees straight from workers' salaries. Now, tell me where that money is going? Couldn't it be used to hire some educational documentaries from abroad?"

He muses: "Hopefully, someone is listening."

SHEPHERD MUTAMBA is a Zimbabwean journalist currently working for Gemini News Service in London.

CHINA

Paper Tigers Learn to Growl a Little

Fons Tuinstra writes from Shanghai

Among those waiting most anxiously to see what the impending death of China's ailing senior leader, Deng Xiaoping, will bring, are the country's journalists. They are currently enjoying a burst of freedom, reports Gemini News Service, but even so, politics remain a tricky area.

CHINA'S official People's Daily has lost more sales in the last few years than most newspapers can hope to put on in a lifetime: circulation is down from six million to two million.

Other communist publications, such as Workers Daily — though compulsory for work units — are also in decline.

The main reason is that they are boring compared with the many new newspapers and magazines which concentrate on crime, human interest stories, cultural events, entertainments and other non-political issues.

It is hard for the government-owned press to compete even though they themselves are getting more freedom, according to Paul Kane, a United States journalist who worked for China Daily for a year.



the invisible line is relatively easy. "Of course we write about Chinese companies which are in trouble," says a reporter with a business newspaper. "Sometimes we then get angry phone calls from the workers who don't like it. But we have to do our work. And nobody says we cannot write the truth."

The problem is politics, and that applies to government and non-government publications.

Dissidents, for example, are political, so the press does not write about them.

"A Chinese journalist would create difficulties for his paper if he reported on dissidents," says Yu Hai Sheng, a reporter with Xinhua, the official news agency.

"In the eyes of the Chinese people these dissidents are not important. The Chinese people want to know where they will get their next breakfast from not about democracy or human rights. It is always foreigners who ask about human rights in China, not the Chinese themselves."

He disagrees with the way Western news agencies handle the issue: "Every day I see the reports of the foreign news agencies and it amazes me how often they report on these dissidents. I don't think it is strange they cover dissidents, but sometimes it seems to be the only issue in

cluding an Iranian diplomat and his kid, was a special case. All the Chinese media got orders from above not to publish it. We only did a small article. I argued for more space for the story, but lost the argument."

A news blackout was imposed on a recent spate of large fires in Xinjiang. Says Yu: "If people heard about these incidents, they would ask themselves, What is our government doing to protect us?"

Only after the culprits were found and a nationwide crackdown on the implementation of fire regulations was launched could the press give some of the gruesome details of the fires.

Yu explains the rules required for writing about political issues arise because "the Chinese expect to get orders from above about how to behave. That is our culture, whether you like it or not."

"We hope we get good orders. If we get orders to fight each other, as happened in the Cultural Revolution of 1966-76, then we don't like that very much. But in general we wait for orders and hope they will be good orders."

FONS TUINSTRA is a freelance Dutch journalist currently living in China.

JUSTICE Abu Sayeed Chowdhury occupied a number of important positions in our national life. He put in his very best in everything he did. As a Deputy Secretary to the President (July 1972-March, 1974), I had the opportunity to know him personally when he was the Head of the Republic.

Justice Chowdhury was, above all, a very kind and sensitive human being. His chief quality was the pursuit of excellence. As the figure-head President in a parliamentary system he did not have much to do with the day-to-day management of the government. However, he invested everything with the stamp of his distinctiveness that came his way.

Mr. A S Chowdhury was appointed a judge of the Dhaka High Court in 1960 preceded by a brief tour of duty as the Advocate-General of East Pakistan. As a High Court Judge he kept himself abreast of the developments in the fields of art and culture. He did a remarkable job as the part-time Chairman of the Bangla Development Board.

In late 1969, he was appointed the Vice-Chancellor of the Dhaka University. He was extremely popular among the teachers, and of course, the students of the premier educational institute.

In March 1971, he had gone to Geneva (accompanied

DOWN THE MEMORY LANE
Personality Profile
Abu Sayeed Chowdhury

by AKM Jalaluddin

by his wife and three children) as the leader of the Pakistan delegation to the Human Rights Commission. He plunged wholeheartedly into the liberation struggle as soon as he heard of the army atrocities in Dhaka. In April of the same year, he was appointed by the exile Bangladesh Government as the Special Representative of Bangladesh to European countries, based in London. In September 1971, he was designated as the leader of the Bangladesh delegation to the 26th session of the United Nations General Assembly.

President Chowdhury insisted that all letters addressed to the Head of State should be replied to. "If the citizens chose to write to their President, they deserve, at least, a reply" often advising them to contact the relevant Ministry. He asked that all messages of felicitations addressed to other Heads of State should be personally cleared by him. And when the drafts would become back from his table, they would be considerably

improved in most cases. All had to agree that he was a perfectionist.

Justice Chowdhury was extremely well-read. In judicial matters he had a special interest. In a parliamentary system, he would quote Nehru, "the president had the right to be informed, encourage and warn." "The President is the symbol of national unity and dignity whereas the prime minister is the centre of publicity and authority," Nehru said.

Justice Chowdhury was a very sophisticated and humane person. As his deputy secretary I accompanied him to Rajshahi University on the occasion of their special convocation to honour Andre Malraux with a doctoral degree. The French intellectual (he was a member of de Gaulle's government as minister for culture) had called for an international brigade to fight with the Mukti Bahini.

While coming back from Rajshahi in the presidential helicopter, I fell ill. Justice Chowdhury saw me suffering in the air force chopper.

Hardly had I settled down in my Manool House bed, there was a telephone call from the president himself asking after my condition. He was very kind and asked my spouse to let him know if there were any problems.

Once the president found a secretary to Government unbelievably delinquent. Apart from this, he appeared to have been duplicitous. The president was very angry and wished to report the secretary to the prime minister.

Sir, we pleaded, "the secretary has the reputation of being a competent functionary and an official with integrity and fair-mindedness."

"Maybe, this is one those things that happened because of his oversight."

"Sir if you would kindly excuse his lapse we have nothing to lose. If he is a good man, he will not conduct himself in this fashion anymore. But in case he were duplicitous by nature, life will catch up with him and you need not complain against him. Justice Chowdhury thought for a minute and said, "All right, let us hope that this is an one-time lapse and he will not do it again."

Justice Chowdhury had the innate humanity in his heart to forget and forgive. And the secretary in question was dutiful and responsible thereafter.

Asian diary



Mango Mania

ALL over Asia everybody seems to rhapsodize over one fruit: the mango.

Indians in particular are gaga over it. In fact, they now call it the "king of fruits", and volumes have been written about it.

Indian history is replete with 'praiseful references. Kings and commoners alike never hid their passion for it.

A famous courtesan of Vaishali (northern state of Bihar) re-christened herself Amrapali, of which the first two syllables — Amra — make up the Sanskrit name for mango.

Ancient Chinese traveller Hsuan Tsang and Arab adventurer Ibn Hanka mentioned the mango in their travelogues and gave it high praise too.

Akbar, the Great Mughal Emperor (16th century), loved the fruit so much he put up the famous Lakh Bagh (orchard of 100,000 mango trees) in Darbhanga, Bihar state.

The celebrated Persian poet, Amir Khusro, composed a couplet in honour of the mango, extolling it as India's choicest fruit and the pride of its gardens.

Alexander the Great became an ardent mango fan after he invaded India in 326 BC.

The mango tree has been described in ancient Hindu books as Kalpavriksha, or the "wish-granting tree", and the epic Ramayana had much to say about it.

It is depicted on the stupas and other sculptures. It is also found in many paintings. Mango-shaped silver pendants and caskets in wood or papier mache are seen in craft bazaars of India.

As in art, so in poetry. The tree figures in many folk and tribal songs of love and long-

ing. Mango poems and songs are written to this day. There are mango riddles and sayings, too.

Indeed, the mango is closely associated with the history of Indian horticulture. It was introduced to several countries of the continental and subcontinental world by Muslim missionaries, Spanish voyagers and Portuguese explorers in the 15th and 16th centuries.

Kama (Cupid, the god of love) tips his arrows with the live spring flowers. One of these is the mango flower.

Strings of mango leaves are hung around for luck or auspiciousness at weddings and other ceremonies. Dry mango twigs are cast into the holy fire.

The mango is, thus, a sacred tree. Both Hindus and Buddhists revere it. The tree finds mention in the Jataka stories of the previous births of the Buddha. Many other tales also centre around the mango.

International mango festivals are held in New Delhi each year. The eighth festival was organized here early last month.

The mango comes not only from Indian states, but also from Bangladesh, Costa Rica, Jamaica, Kenya, Gambia, Venezuela, Puerto Rico and Pakistan, and therefore has multiplied itself into thousands of varieties.

India is the largest mango producer in the world, ac-

counting for 64 per cent (10 million tons a year) of global production. Mangoes are grown in India, raised in an area of 2,500,000 hectares of land.

Mangoes at the recent festival were in all shapes, sizes and colours. The smallest named Moti Dana, weighed just 2 grams, about the size of a green pea. Among the heaviest varieties weighed an astonishing 2 kilograms.

The popular varieties include Alphanso, Khasul Khas, Rataul, Rumani, Safada, Rajwala (one mango weighs more than one kg), Raspuria, Langra and Dussehri.

India's mango export is not more than 15 per cent, however. One of the reasons is the proximity of the Karachi port to the Gulf, a major mango consumer region. This makes Pakistani mangoes cheaper than the Indian ones. However, in Europe, Indian mangoes are preferred to those of Pakistan.

Mango producers say the market is very strong at present with the demand for mangoes increasing within the country as well as the USA, Britain, Nepal, Bangladesh, the UAE, China and Japan also has shown interest in Indian mangoes.

Along with the Mango Festival, mango culinary contests are also organized. Chefs of various leading hotels participate. Then there

is also the mango eating contest. A person consuming most mangoes in a limited time is given a special prize.

A participant in the mango-eating contest has to pay a fee of Rs. 75 for participating.

Delhi's Minister for Tourism, Mr SP Rataul, told newsmen that the main aim behind holding this festival was to encourage the mango growers and publicize more than 1,000 varieties of the fruit being produced in this country.

Mrs P M Singh, chairperson and managing director, Delhi Tourism and Transportation Development Corporation, believes the festival not only creates an awakening about the fruit but also is of great help to growers and exporters.

A spokesman of the Agricultural and Processed Food Product Export Development Authority (APEDA) told me that there was heavy demand for Indian mangoes in Russia. The Langra variety sells like hot cake there.

Mango is a cash crop, a good foreign exchange earner.

According to the spokesman, mango exports have been steadily rising since 1990-9. In 1993-94, the exports reached the Rs. 500 million mark.

Incidentally, India is the original home of this delicious fruit. This is evidenced by the fact that its botanical name is Mangifera indica.

Young and old, rich and poor, high and low all enjoy eating mangoes. So was it in the centuries gone by.

Some of the prominent mango-growing states of India are Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Assam, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu.

— Depthnews Asia

African Films Get London Screening

Jim Kelsey writes from London

al Film Theatre (NFT) which, with the Barbican centre and regional cinemas, is currently staging the biggest celebration ever of African films and television in the UK. DDM said that he was highly delighted that his movies, and those of his African colleagues, were being screened as part of the nationwide five million pounds sterling African '95 Festival of Art and Culture.

With its art exhibitions, sculpture, cinema, workshops, music, singers and dancers, Africa '95 runs from August to December backed by discussion programmes on BBC radio and television. The object is to provide a shop window for the wide diversity of African artistic endeavour and introduce a largely unfamiliar lively culture to the British public.

Interviewed after a screening of 'Touki-Bouki', made 25 years ago in Senegal, DDM said he thought the film stood up very well. "Most probably you can see all the influences. I am a great admirer of Robert Altman and Sidney Lumet, but of course, I did not have their resources — nor do I now."

'Touki-Bouki', with its savage bloodletting abattoir scenes, shimmering landscapes and images of shanty town life mixing fantasy and realism, is a humorous story of a flamboyantly alienated pair of university students. They dream of escaping the claustrophobic life of Dakar to the Paris of Josephine Baker.

Looking back, obviously the main character Mory — he's a kind of anti-hero — was me. He's a likeable rebel who doesn't escape. But the

OR film makers in Africa the continent is full of unfulfilled dreams, according to the Senegalese director Djibril Diop Mambety — known usually as DDM. Speaking at London's National Film Theatre (NFT) which, with the Barbican centre and regional cinemas, is currently staging the biggest celebration ever of African films and television in the UK.

world of unfulfilled dreams — there are many talented directors, many projects but like here in the UK, funding is short. Historically, the African continent is going through seachange and I believe that the continent's movie directors should be telling those contemporary stories, recording the changes to their countries dramatically on screen," said DDM.

Later, in the NFT's two-month screen griots: the art and imagination of African cinema season (griots is the wolof name for a storyteller), there will be a screening of DDM's 'Hyenas' which was first seen at the Cannes Film Festival in 1992.

The Senegalese director, who is expected to return to London on 9/10 September to attend a conference devoted to Africa cinema and the history of cinematic ideas, is currently working on 'Munhumutapa Emperor of Gold', an epic about a king who ruled ancient Zimbabwe.

The London season of African films also includes titles from Algeria, Burkina Faso, Cameroon; Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Mali, Mozambique, Nigeria, South Africa and Tunisia. Ethiopia's Haile Gerima is presenting seminars which include screenings of his films and later in the year, programmes will be devoted to African TV movie mysteries, melodramas, comedies and screenings of archive films.

Africa's 95 is financed by the British government, African countries, banks, industrial and commercial organisations and the European Community.

ART

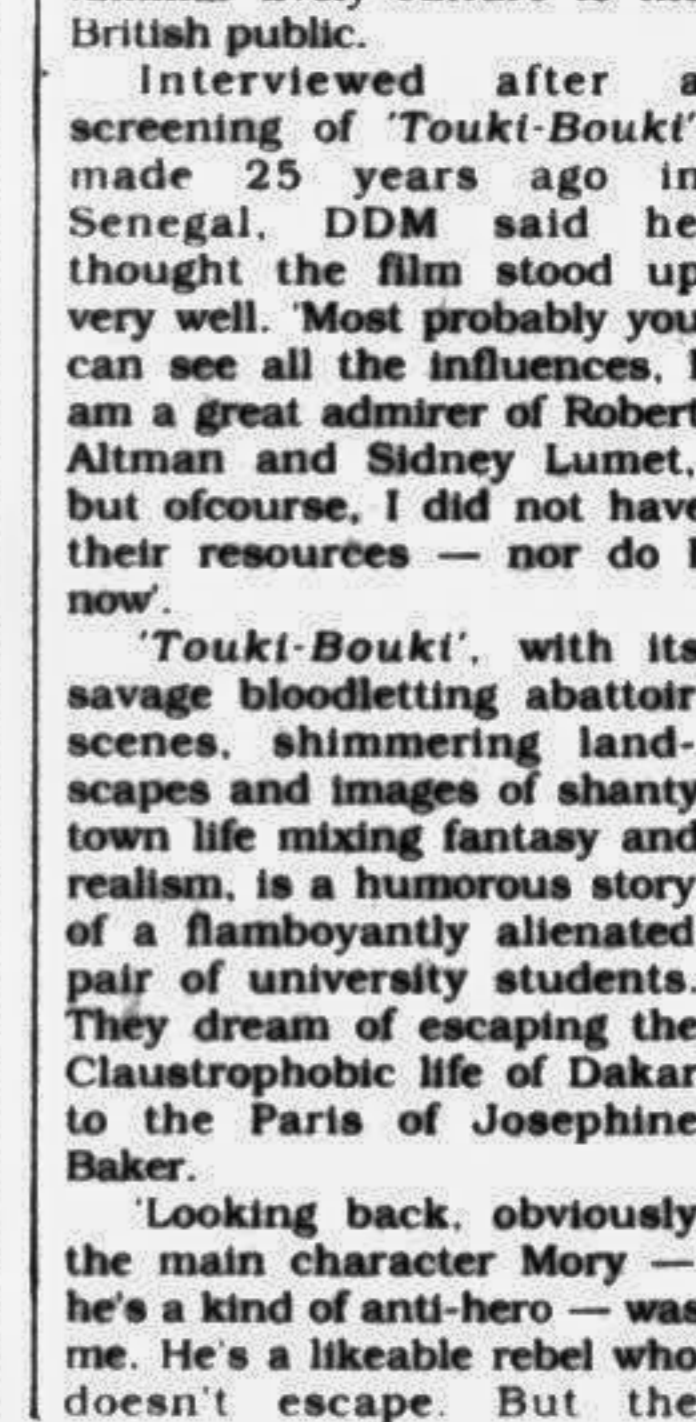
Vision so Vivid and Vibrant

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riner's interest in the beauty of sea snakes.

II

Throughout the history of art, it has been noticed that each artist sought to solve a problem in dealing with his subject and eventually came up with a style wholly personal. Impressionist artists sought to capture the ephemeral effects of light on surfaces which led them to paint en plein air and the effect was a new painting hitherto unknown to the world. British landscapist J M W Turner's interest was the creation of a romantic mood while German artist Caspar David Friedrich was absorbed



with the intention of evocating spiritual values through his landscapes? Now what it is that Nadi seeks to solve in his snowy landscapes? A close look at his works would convince one that his indomitable interest is to capture the vastness of the typical Siberian snowy region and the effect of that deep space. That also explains why he tried his hand in a now forgotten genre like scroll painting.