Gertrude Joch Robinson

*News Agencies and World News*

In Canada, the United States and Yugoslavia: Methods and Data
(Switzerland: University of Fribourg Press, 1981.)

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This recent book is a collection of nine previously published essays dealing with three different news reporting scenes: the first is global agencies; the second, regional; and the third, national. The three levels are dealt with in three different sections. Part I consists of three papers dealing mainly with Tanjug News Agency. These chapters are quite dated, appearing originally in 1968 and, in turn, deal with data that was collected in the mid-60's. Although from a historical point of view they are both interesting and useful, the data analysis is superficial and the application of sophisticated statistical measurement is lacking. However, it is interesting to note, that Tanjug is today a very major part of the debate over world news flow and the author did show considerable foresight in conducting research as a part of her doctoral work involving this Third World news agency at an early time.

Part II is a collection of four essays that deal with news flow. The chapter reviewing gate-keeping research is sound but quite dated. It reviews the literature up to 1973. This means that the recent decade, when there have been further studies and new theoretical directions, is not included. The second chapter deals with social stratification in international news flow. Once again, it relies on an initial study
of October 22, 1966, which contrasted two major international news agencies, Associated Press's (AP) European Service and Yugoslavia's Tanjug's General Service. The discussion of news values and related issues provides the reader with important background to what are important aspects of how news is transferred using a systems approach.

The final two chapters contrast Canadian and U.S. news coverage and values. The chapter dealing with some hypotheses about Canadian - U.S. news values is particularly impressive. It contrasts the Canada - U.S. news flow and ownership and provides insights into this critical issue. For example, it points out the "infinitesimal 1.6% coverage of Canada in the U. S. press" whereas Canadian papers on the average carry 27% foreign news and the bulk of that is obviously from the United States. In addition, the article points out that the majority of Canadian news that does appear in U. S. papers is of a soft-news variety dealing with corruption, violence, disaster or accidents. This is very similar to the preoccupation of the international wire services with the coups and earthquakes syndrome that the Third World is currently lamenting.

The following chapter pursues the theme of American and Canadian Press coverage with more in depth and more recent analysis. This article also concludes with a documentation and discussion of the preponderance of Canadian foreign correspondents being located in one foreign city, London, and the resultant heavy coverage of Great Britain in Canadian newspapers.

Part III deals with "The Canadian Press Agency and World News." This section is a logical outgrowth of the preceding section because it, in turn, deals with greater detail about the Canadian Press (CP) wire service. This section begins with a paper dealing with a necessary ingredient in any media comparison from a Canad-
ian perspective. This involves an analysis of the Quebec press groups along with the English-Canadian and U.S. newspapers. The inclusion of seven francophone newspapers gives considerable strength to both the analysis and conclusions. It is significant to note that just as the anglophone press is to a large part in terms of foreign coverage, an information colony of AP, so also the francophone press is a colony of Agency France Press (AFP). The author also notes that the francophone press take considerable copy from Reuters as well. The article continues with a documentation of the systematic differences between anglophone and francophone presses of Canada.

The following chapter details the history of the CP Wire Service although this has now been superseded by the more detailed documentation produced by the Kent Royal Commission on Newspapers. The piece does provide particularly useful information about how the English and French Canadian media customers of CP utilize the wire service copy. Finally, this piece concludes with a discussion of the implications of global news and in particular discusses CP as a case study for examination within the context of the New World Information Order. Given both the critical nature and growing debate concerning the New World Information Order, this section provides insight into the role of national news agencies and foreign news inflows or, in some cases, the lack of a proper inflow. The author concludes with the important point that just as Canadian voices have had to work for decades with considerable diligence in order to be heard within their own national boundaries, so now also are Third World voices attempting to be heard on the international front.

The Epilogue is a very good piece of work. It begins with a confession that the previous papers, in essence, are working papers, stemming
from the author's 1964 doctoral study, yet the Epilogue, in placing the papers in retrospect, analyzes their origins and interrelationships from both the theoretical and organizational perspective. This is what makes the book of value. It is an implicit account of several themes that now are embodied within the debate surrounding the New World Information Order and is a solid contribution to the meager Canadian literature on international news flow.

(Please note: This book is available from the Graduate Program in Communications, McGill University, 815 Sherbrooke Street W., Montreal, P.Q. H3A 2K6, instead of the publisher. The price is $13.50.)