

FOREWORD

The third volume of Scandinavian Political Studies deals with the mass media in Scandinavia. Without pretensions to be exhaustive, or even to give a representative picture of the work being done in this vast field, the articles have been selected in order to present different approaches to the study of the structure of mass media, the initial conditions of establishment, the interaction between media and the different markets and variables that impinge on the different consumers.

The surging consumption of mass media in the last generation has caused this interest. One of the most confusing phenomena to be observed during this span of time is the development of national and international communication systems. It is confusing since we cannot refer this development to a need in the traditional sense: apparently more information is produced and disseminated than the amount consumed. Newspapers, radio and television record more information on social events than it is possible to retrieve if and when such a demand should occur. Obviously no limit for this consumption has been established. The figures for radio-listening are relatively stable in spite of the success of television. Book sale is increasing, people read more and far greater newspapers than thirty years ago. Magazines and weeklies are more voluminous and contain more text than ever before.

Part of the explanation can be found in the fact that information has become a negotiable currency to be capitalized in power, position and prestige. Colin Cherry deliberately compared communication system with monetary systems as being *exchange systems*, and indicate that the effect on the society of this gigantic network is about the same as if the monetary system would have been invented today. "Information may become the token of power eventually".

The stratification of the distributing system is another point to explain the discrepancy between production and consumption of information. Some people possess more information than others, because they have more easy access to it, or it may be expected of them because of their relations to other people. Some people *exchange* more than others. The patterns of information distribution in a society seem to depend on the same factors that determine the distribution of other important values in society: we can well sense this by looking on the basic parameter for information distribution, the literacy percentages of different countries.

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The conception of information exchange implies a model of the rational man: one who accepts a good in exchange for another, or at least make decisions only to the extent he can survey some consequences of his choice. In many ways this is an extreme model. Decisions are being made of which we are not able to reveal rational motives or sufficient informational basis for the decision. Election research very often points to decisions like this: there may be and often are a lack of knowledge of alternatives and consequences in choosing between parties throughout the greater part of the electorate. This does not seem to complicate the decision-making process for the voters. We may discover other motives for the choice. However, whether we base our observation on this model or we accept other motives for the information-seeking, there may at least be some degree of rationality involved in the choice: either some sort of gratification is possible in certain types of information-seeking, or one accept loyalties or commitments as the basis of choice.

Because information may be exchanged in different goods and values, information-seeking will be different. Different people will seek different information, depending on motives for information-seeking or on the alternatives set for him in his environment. The structure of the mass media may be treated as environmental variables: the existence of a party press, the access to television and the possibility of tuning in the radio, set the range of alternatives for this information-seeking.

In Scandinavia at least, the initial conditions of establishment seem to be very important for the understanding of the present structure of the mass media. The articles from Finland, Sweden and Norway on the rise and structure of the party press, carry a lot of documentation on these conditions. The Swedish and Finnish article by Salmelin and Hadenius and his co-authors, link the rise of the social democratic press to the organization structure of the social democratic parties in Finland and Sweden. Høyer, in the Norwegian article, applies a somewhat different approach: by means of a statistical material dating back to the nineteenth century he tries to follow the interaction between media and the different markets for newspapers a long way into the present structure of the Norwegian press.

The contribution from Denmark by Thomsen and from Sweden by Birgersson, have some similarities in problems although their methods differ greatly. They are trying to make out what difference it does to the reader seeking a particular kind of information, to have a press structured along political lines or structured according to size and coverage.

In another Finnish contribution, Nordenstreng presents a methodologically advanced analysis of editors perception of world leaders. As students of mass communication, we know that these and similar findings may be of importance in any analysis of journalists and their presentation of world events for their readers. So far, this is our only presentation linked directly to these important gatekeepers.

Westerståhl and Sjöblom, both Swedish contributors, present each in their own way, conceptual schemes for the analysis of political communication. Empirical application of these models are not included here. Both authors, however, have proceeded to make use of the models in other contexts.

Helen Åreskjold, Bergen, in co-operation with Sten Berglund, Umeå, Raumo

Lehtinen, Helsinki, Hans P. Clausen and Peder Hansen, Århus have collected and organized the bibliography for this volume. The bibliography is updated until 1966. The next volume the bibliography will include both 1967 and 1968 in order to bring this important contribution up to date. The author wants to state his most sincere thanks to Helen Åreskjold for this laborious task which will be continued into the next volume. He also wants to thank the editorial board for a never ending and stimulating interest in this volume.

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In the next volume, it is our hope that we can also include contributions from Iceland. Editor of Volume IV is dr. Olof Ruin, of Stockholm, Sweden.

Oslo, December 1968

Per Torsvik