
Freedonia

The following story takes place in the country of Freedonia, and mainly in Palisades, the capital.

Over the past decade, Freedonians have elected a series of governments that have promised economic and democratic reforms. But the efforts to build a sound base for sustainable socioeconomic development and prosperity have been hampered by corruption and domestic instability.

Falling export revenues, poor harvests, and mismanagement in the civil service have worsened Freedonia's economic and social problems. During the past two years, however, a process of democratization has gained momentum, catching the attention and earning the appreciation of foreign donors.

Multiparty elections last year led to the formation of a coalition government, which apparently enjoys the backing of the business elite. The government, led by the Liberal Party of Freedonia (LPF), has launched an economic reform program aimed at attracting foreign investors and promoting economic growth.

The government's reform efforts have received strong criticism from the main opposition party in Parliament, the Progress Party of Freedonia (PPF). The PPF advocates a more equal distribution of resources and protection of the rights of the poor and underprivileged.

Freedonia's Daily Press

Under the previous regime, all of Freedonia's newspapers were subservient mouth-pieces of those in power. Journalists were not permitted to challenge authorities or politicians in the ruling party. When they did, they risked being jailed, tortured, or even executed.

Today, things have changed for the better. Human rights abuses have diminished. Reporters who anger the regime are still occasionally jailed or harassed by the authorities, but limits on freedom of expression have eased considerably. A new breed of independent journalist has emerged and is fueling the popularity of a group of fiercely independent newspapers. These papers are quickly drawing readers away from the stuffy, old-style publications that continue to trumpet the government's line.

In the following exercise, participants will join reporting staffs at the following five of Freedonia's most independent and respected newspapers, fearless publications that are committed to reporting the truth, even when that means challenging the interests of those who hold power.

- ◆ *THE PALISADES POST*
- ◆ *THE OBSERVER*
- ◆ *THE GAZETTE*
- ◆ *THE GLOBE*
- ◆ *THE DAILY INQUIRER*

Freedonia—Part 1

Monday Morning in the Newsroom

A press release arrived shortly before deadline from the London-based firm of Thonka, Inc., whose managing director is Mr. Leonard Singer, a native of Freedonia. You have confirmed that this is a genuine press release from the company. It reads:

PRESS RELEASE: A NEW BEGINNING FOR GREEN PARK

Last week in London, Thonka, Inc., signed a letter of understanding with Amari Hotels on the financing and construction of a five-star luxury hotel in the Palisades suburb known as Green Park.

A site has now been designated for the hotel, but needs formal approval from Mr. David Suzdal, Minister of Planning. The site formerly served as location for the now defunct Tigers Battalion of Freedonia's Defense Forces and was recently acquired by Thonka, Inc., from Bombay Traders Ltd.

"Our company's negotiations with the Ministry of Planning are progressing, and we expect the documents of approval to be finalized early next month," said Mr. Leonard Singer, managing director of Thonka, Inc.

"We are happy to announce that this development project is likely to create at least 800 jobs at the construction site. This will make the project the single largest contribution to the development of the tourism industry in Freedonia, and thus will be perfectly in line with the internationally acclaimed priorities of the government of Freedonia," Mr. Singer added.

Work will commence immediately. Applicants, mainly masons, bulldozer drivers, concrete workers, and carpenters, are kindly requested to turn up at our recruitment office on 14 Willow Street, starting Monday.

Task

How do you deal with this piece of information?

- (1) On your own, take 10 minutes to draw up two lists—one of the newsworthy information in the press release about which you have no doubt, and a second outlining the things you need to check.
 - (2) Discuss the issue and write a news article including headline, subhead, and the lead paragraph, to be delivered in 20 minutes.
-

Freedonia—Part 2

Tuesday Morning in the Newsroom

You are checking information on the Green Park case. Your editor arrives one hour late. His car was blocked on his way to the office by angry protesters in Green Park. On his arrival, the editor is furious because today's story about the hotel project does not give the full picture.

While in Green Park, the editor saw a handful of armed policemen who had been called to the area to protect two bulldozers parked near the designated construction site. When passing a parked fire engine, the editor's brand new Toyota Corolla was hit by several stones thrown by protesters.

The news meeting starts. The editor complains: "Look at today's papers: 'Freedonia Tourism in for Major Boost,' 'Hotel Project Stalls as Minister Suzdal Drags Feet,' 'Five-Star Hotel for Green Park.' Nobody got the real story! Why did you not stress that work starts on Monday? Everybody in Green Park knows that. It is a well-known fact. Activists are throwing stones out there!"

One of your colleagues replies: "We had planned to do the follow-up story today. We would focus on the decision to start work before formal approval of the project, as mentioned in the press release."

Your editor states: "That will not do. We cannot leave the hard news to our competitors. I want the full story, and I want it now!"

Meanwhile, Thonka, Inc., has announced an executive press briefing on the new hotel project at 2 p.m. at the Grand Imperial Hotel. Extensive information on the project will be made available. Among those attending will be Mr. Leonard Singer, managing director of Thonka, Inc.; Mr. Paddington Rich, director of development, Amari Hotels; Mr. Jimmy Wong, the hotel company's chief technical director; and a representative of the Ministry of Planning.

Task

Discuss your journalistic approach to the Green Park case as it is now developing. What is your main story? How do you catch up with the competitors? In 20 minutes, come up with a detailed plan of action listing your main priorities and the most important questions you want answered. Who will do what?

Freedonia—Part 3

Later in the Newsroom, After the Thonka Press Conference, One Hour Before Deadline

The newspaper's driver returns from his brother's well-known restaurant, Green Park Paradise, with somosas and other snacks for the reporters. He tells them he has spotted small bonfires in the crowded alleys of Green Park, and that the demonstrators are becoming increasingly agitated.

Half an hour later, the phone rings. A man on the phone says that he is a Green Park resident, but refuses to give his name. His message is the following:

Things are getting out of control. Fighting has erupted in the streets. The policemen have gone mad, because one of their colleagues has been killed in Green Park. They have called in reinforcements and have started to clear the area near the Paradise Restaurant. People have been arrested and taken away—even children, including my niece, and she is only eleven!

Task

What is to be done now? Immediate decisions are needed. Your readers expect to be informed. Discuss the situation for 5 minutes and decide what goes into the main Green Park story in tomorrow's paper (take notes).

Freedonia—Part 4

Reporters who call the police station get the following response: “We cannot assist you because we have no transportation. Would it be possible for you to come and pick us up?”

Task

Time is running. Deadline is approaching. Write the full story, including the headline and subhead. You now have 20 minutes to deadline.

Freedonia—Part 5

Wednesday Morning in the Newsroom

The reporter who was in Green Park yesterday evening and stayed until past midnight delivers an account of his observations. He notes that the parents of some of the children who were taken away told him that they were very grateful to the police for protecting the children by moving them away from the clashes. “Not a single arrest was made,” the reporter tells you. The children were safely returned to their families as the protesters withdrew from the streets during the evening. The area was quiet around midnight. Nobody was injured, except a young girl who was hit and seriously injured by a black luxury car. The driver fled the scene of the accident.

Another reporter has called the police. The message on the telephone answering machine is as follows:

Until 4 p.m. today, no assistance from this office is available because all our staff will be attending the memorial service of a colleague who died tragically yesterday in Green Park.

A third reporter has called the Town Hall and talked to the mayor’s secretary. She told him the mayor will issue a statement at 4 p.m.

Task

Discuss how you plan to follow up on the Green Park case. Present your plan of action in 10 minutes.

Freedonia—Part 6

5 p.m. in the Newsroom

Radio Freedonia has just broadcast a speech made by Mr. Peter Lusso, the chief of police, at the memorial service of the deceased policeman. He fiercely attacked the media for their reporting on the unrest in Green Park, describing the reports as “a complete distortion of facts.”

He quotes selected stories from today’s papers: “Policeman Killed by Riotous Crowd,” “Policemen Go Mad,” “Unconfirmed Reports Say Policeman Killed,” “Fighting in Streets as Police Rampage,” “Cop Killed in Green Park Disturbances.”

Mr. Lusso continues: “This is a disgrace to the nation and a personal agony for the family and friends of a respected and beloved colleague. While we are gathered here in common grief, the public has been presented with a distorted picture of yesterday’s unfortunate events. The police had complete control of the situation in Green Park. There was no violence. Our respected colleague, Sam Lujak, died of a sudden and unprovoked heart attack. Why do the national media resort to such practices of irresponsible, tabloid slandering by publishing what they refer to as “unconfirmed reports” about a killing that never took place?”

End of broadcast. A few minutes later, Freedonia’s News Agency sends out the complete text of Mr. Lusso’s speech.

Meanwhile, Palisades’s mayor, Mr. Michael Cramer, has completed his press conference at the Town Hall. His message is the following:

An attractive piece of land in the district of Flora, 20 kilometers south of Palisades, has been designated to be given to the Green Park squatters. They are free to move out there immediately. Each family will be given a fertile plot of land there and a sum of money. Otherwise, families will be offered an apartment elsewhere in the city. Whichever they choose, these families will be enabled to join Freedonia’s transformation to a prosperous, democratic society.

Regarding the hotel project, the plans will continue. Work will start on Monday, and will provide at least 1,100 jobs for the community.

Task

Call a news meeting and discuss possible follow-up stories for tomorrow’s edition. Write the frame of your main story (headline, subhead, and lead) in 20 minutes.

Freedonia—Part 7

Thursday Morning in the Newsroom

Your reporter has just returned from police headquarters, where she had a long meeting with the police chief. The police now consider the unrest in Green Park a closed matter. On the mayor's request, the police have agreed to assist in the relocation of the Green Park squatters to Flora, on the condition that the start of the hotel construction work is postponed at least one week.

The parties involved—the mayor; Thonka, Inc.; and the Ministry of Planning—have agreed that the relocation of the squatters should be conducted in an orderly manner that is acceptable to the community. Regarding the deceased policeman, his relatives have authorized the police chief to release a medical statement from the family's doctor. It says that Sam Lujak suffered from heart trouble and was undergoing medical treatment at the time of his death.

The reporter has also been informed about the traffic accident, in which a black luxury car drove off after hitting a young girl. After a thorough investigation of the case, police were able to identify the driver and the passengers in the car. The driver was Miss Divine Lovejoy, who won the Miss Freedonia Beauty Contest of 1989. She is currently employed as hostess at the Sexy London Club, Palisades's jet-set nightclub. In the backseat was Mr. Teddy Cramer, the eldest son of Palisades's mayor, and Miss Diana Wildlife.

The two young ladies explained that after having a few drinks in the bar, Mr. Cramer had decided not to drive and handed over the car keys to Miss Lovejoy. The party left the Sexy London Club in the black Mercedes owned by Mr. Cramer's father just after midnight.

According to the two ladies' accounts to investigators, Mr. Cramer had fallen asleep as they were on their way to Miss Lovejoy's home. In a dark, crowded street in Green Park, something hit the car. They believed it to be a stone or a piece of wood thrown by the protesters and left without checking what had happened. After being questioned, the three were released. According to police, they expressed deep regrets for having unwittingly caused the injuries to the young girl, and said they were prepared to offer her financial compensation. Police consider the case closed.

The driver arrived unexpectedly at the editorial meeting. He has the following message:

Somebody I know has acquired a complete survey of the expanded hotel construction plans, including the list of contractors. We can get that list, on two conditions: secrecy about the source of the information and \$100 in small notes, to be delivered in an envelope. I have been instructed to pass the money on to the source.

Task

First, how do you respond to the driver's message? How do you act on these various pieces of information? What line of action will you pursue? Discuss the issue and present a plan in 15 minutes.

Freedonia—Part 8

One Hour Later

Your editor arrives. He hears about the driver's offer and becomes furious. By no means will the editor pay for the list. That would be against editorial policy. The driver is sacked immediately.

Before leaving the premises, the driver tells one of your colleagues, in a low voice: "You can get the document for free if you buy me lunch. Meet me at the Green Park Paradise in half an hour."

Task

What is your next move?

Freedonia—Part 9

Lunchtime at the Green Park Paradise

The reporter meets the sacked driver, who tells him: “You can get the document if you buy me lunch and never reveal where you got it.”

Task

What do you do?

Hold a 10-minute discussion. You are now expected to have gathered enough information to give your readers an overall insight into the Green Park affair. Have you done your best?

Freedonia—Part 10

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL: The document shows that the hotel project has been expanded and now includes a country club with a huge golf course. The driver's brother (the owner of the Green Park Paradise) had been negotiating the contract to run the restaurant in the country club, but that contract has now been given to Mr. Highlife—the son of your editor!

Task

Consider your next move—and tell us! You have 10 minutes.

Freedonia—Part 11

Thursday Afternoon in the Newsroom

The editor has unexpectedly left the office. Your subeditor enters and says: “We are losing readers and our competitive edge. I want better and more interesting stories on the Green Park affair.”

Task

Divide your group into two teams.

Team 1:

Write one sheet for the front page—your main story, including headline, subheading, introduction, and the crux of the story.

Team 2:

Write a maximum of two sheets for the feature section, giving the readers full insight into the recent events, including headline, subheading, introduction, and a comprehensive story.

Deadline: 60 minutes from now.

FREEDONIA

A Case Study in Investigative Journalism

Alex Larsen and Flemming Ytzen

EDI Case Studies

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Foreword

The Economic Development Institute's Communications Strategies Program is designed to help journalists and government communicators develop the skills they need to operate in a democratic society and within a market economy. Part of this effort has focused on workshops in investigative journalism, one element of a broader effort to assist the promotion of national integrity and the fight against corruption. Workshops have been held in Africa and in Central and Eastern Europe.

These workshops are designed to equip journalists with the professional skills needed to investigate and report on incidences of corruption. The goal is to raise public awareness that "clean government" is every citizen's right, and that it should not be necessary to pay a bribe to receive a public service.

This case study of Freedonia forms an integral part of our courses in investigative journalism. It presents a case of graft and corruption in the fictitious country of Freedonia, mainly in Palisades, the capital. The setting is typical, and one that many participants in EDI's workshops have found familiar. The case study comprises eleven parts—to be used sequentially—and each one presents new information and challenges the journalist to make critical decisions about how to report each new piece of "news." As the case unfolds, so does an intricate web of bribery and corruption that develops both the technical skills and the professional ethics of the participants.

The principal authors of the case study are Alex Larsen and Flemming Ytzen, investigative journalists working in Denmark. The teaching note was prepared by Rod MacDonnell and Alex Norris, investigative journalists from Canada. Contextual advice and editorial guidance were provided by Dr. Petter Langseth, senior public sector management specialist, and Dr. Rick Stapenhurst, public sector management specialist, both in the Regulatory Reform and Private Enterprise Division of EDI. Mark M. Nelson, of EDI's Communications Strategies Program, edited the cases in March 1997 for use in both developing countries and those undergoing the change from centrally planned economies to market systems.

Danny Leipziger

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Preface

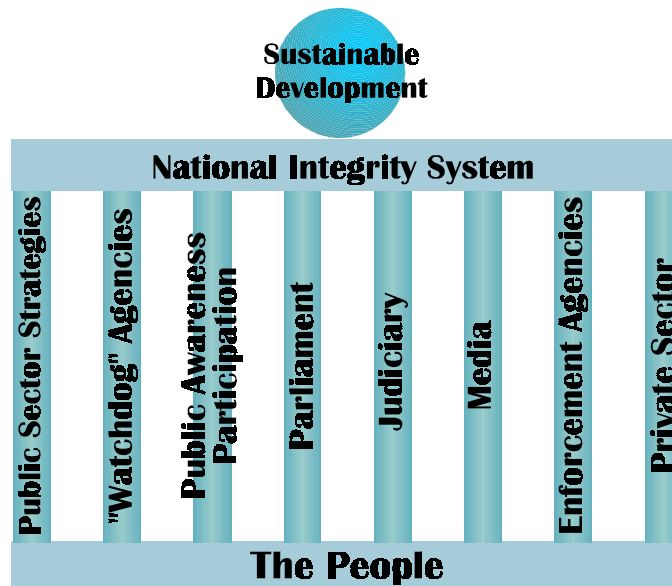
by Rick Stapenhurst

As part of its assistance to client countries to help control corruption, EDI—with Transparency International—has developed the concept of “national integrity systems” as a comprehensive means to identify and strengthen those institutions whose mandate includes fighting corruption.

Participants at EDI workshops have identified eight such institutions, known as the “pillars of integrity.”¹ They include:

- Public sector reforms
- Watchdog agencies (anti-corruption agencies, auditor general, and ombudsman)
- Public awareness and participation
- Parliament
- The judiciary
- The media
- Enforcement agencies
- The private sector.

These pillars are interdependent. If one pillar weakens, an increased load is thrown onto the others. If several weaken, their load will tilt and the round ball of “sustainable development” rolls off (see diagram).



1. The term “pillars of corruption” was first coined by Ibrahim Seushi, President of Transparency International–Tanzania.

EDI, in collaboration with local journalists' associations (including the Uganda Journalists Association; the Uganda Media Women's Association; the Media Network, Uganda; the Association of Journalists and Media Workers, Tanzania; the Media Trust, Mauritius; and WANAD, Benin) has facilitated both introductory and advanced investigative journalism courses. The goals of these workshops are (a) to raise journalists' awareness of the costs of corruption; (b) to highlight the role that the media can play in fighting corruption; and (c) to impart skills in investigative journalism so that journalists can better undertake investigations into corruption in a professional and ethical manner.

This Case Study was developed by EDI for use in its introductory investigative journalism workshops. It focuses on key issues to be addressed by journalists when undertaking investigations, including (a) the need to ask probing questions; (b) the desirability of being skeptical, especially when receiving information from interested or biased parties; (c) how to handle sources of information; and (d) such ethical issues as to whether it is appropriate to pay sources for exclusive information.

While the Case Study presents an unfolding story of bribery and corruption in the fictitious country of Freedonia, participants at EDI's workshops frequently ask if it is, in fact, based on the situation in their own counties! It has proven to be an invaluable teaching tool, much appreciated by participants; indeed, graduates of EDI's workshops frequently refer to themselves as "citizens of Freedonia"!