

Anthony Smith found, on his return from Africa, that he no longer had time for the 'routine' work of a Science Correspondent, and he resigned. Another 5-minute interview for me with the Editor, and on 10 December 1963 I became the now-confirmed Science Correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph*. During my probationary period I had already learnt that the style of writing a newspaper story was quite unlike any previous writing I had done, as for example my Editorials for *Discovery*.

In the best academic tradition I began my reports for the *Telegraph* with a historical survey of the subject, and then after a few paragraphs of background, I started to write about the news item. The result was simply that none of my stories were printed for the next morning's edition of the paper. After a week or so of such failures, I sought advice from the friendly elderly Scotsman who was in charge of the newsroom, the hub of reporters to be assigned to cover the home news for the following day's paper. The news from the rest of the world, 'foreign news', were handled through the Foreign News Editor, Mr Ricky Marsh, an especially delightful and highly efficient journalist-editor.

It was explained to me that the average newspaper reader, to whom after all the contents of the paper was directed, and on whose approval the circulation, and hence the financial success of the *Daily Telegraph* depended, was a gentleman (rarely, and only secondly a lady) who had little time to spare over breakfast or in the commuter train to his office, to read history. He was only interested in the latest news. Hence his attention must be captured, as nearly all readers were ignorant of the news.

If this basic rule of all newspaper reporting was not followed, the reader's eye would jump to another story, or worse still, would throw away the paper and buy another paper the next day and not the *Telegraph*. Only later in the story, any historical background can be given, and can only be printed if enough space is available. "Cut from the back" was the golden rule of the final editors. It was further explained to me that each night, about ten times as much news materials is on offer to the 'Copy taster', the late night final arbiter of what is printed and what is left out. Had these basic principles been explained to me at the beginning of my career in Fleet Street, I would have had an easier start.

Lo and behold, the magic worked, and my first reports appeared in print. I was of course delighted. I can no longer trace of what they consisted, but they were of a minor nature, otherwise Mary would have cut and filed them, a duty she fulfilled meticulously early every morning for all my later articles.