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## THE NEW INTERNATIONAL INFORMATION ORDER : DEVELOPMENT AND OBSTACLES

by

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"The widening of the capacity to inform must be viewed as an essential component of attempts to create a new international order and, as such, the monopolistic and discriminatory practices inherent in current international information dissemination must be deemed as one of the worst, though subtle, characteristics of the present system".

in: Reshaping the international order, 1976.

A. The present international information order is characterised by the following components:

1. its 'synchronic' mode: the international dissemination of information is geared towards the synchronisation of large audiences with the viewpoints of few gatekeepers;
2. its various control mechanisms: there is widespread governmental control of information flows in the present order, there is equally widespread commercial control of information flows and additionally there is the subtle though pervasive control mechanism of professional, self-imposed censorship;
3. its oligopolised infra-structures: the access to finance capital, the access to technology and the access to marketing channels are controlled by few large transnational corporations;
4. its non-participatory organisational model: a hierarchical (pyramidal) model in which the decisive flow of information goes from the elite of decision-makers to the social base from which mainly 'synchronic' responses flow to the top;
5. its ethnocentric, prejudicial nature.

Against the background of these characteristics the following considerations are pertinent to an understanding of the problems concerning the international information order.

- a. The existing international political and economic order is determined by unequal power-relations that consolidate a system of asymmetrical connections between the advanced industrial states and the countries of the Third World. The international information order is part and parcel of this system.
- b. Within the parameters of this system the flow of international information fulfils its main functions: serving military, diplomatic, financial, ideological and recreative ends.
- c. The major exponents of the present information order: the mass media have become for most people their sole source for information about the world.
- d. The development of modern information technology has not created the expected 'global village', but rather a 'corporate village' in which information flows are patterned according to the interests of few large transnational corporations.
- e. The increasing volume of information about international affairs has led people to understand even less about their own world.

#### B. The international debate

Since some years many international fora have devoted serious attention to the question in how far the present international information order could or should be transformed. Most decisive in this debate has been the contribution from the movement of non-aligned countries. They have coupled their clear endeavour to obtain a new international economic order to the necessity for a new international information order. In 1973 the heads of state of the non-aligned countries, meeting in Algiers, determined that, "developing countries should

take concerted action to reorganize existing communication channels which are a legacy from the colonial past."

Three years later, in March of 1976, this was elaborated on during a symposium of non-aligned countries, which was devoted to the information media. The final report of this symposium, which was held in Tunis, received the title: "The emancipation of the mass media in non-aligned countries." This emancipation "reflects the fundamental interest ... in their economic and political liberation, and is a basic factor in these countries which fight for independence, equality, progress, peace and cooperation". In order to effect this emancipation, a new information order is necessary which must be brought about mainly through the efforts of non-aligned countries. Mutual co-operation, help and solidarity are the most essential instruments needed in order to achieve independence. In this context, the symposium primarily recommended co-operation in supplying news, as well as in training journalists and in exchanging technology. In conclusion, the participants demanded that a mutual fund be established with which the mass media in non-aligned countries can be developed.

Shortly after the Tunis conference a meeting was held in Mexico (May, 1976) under the auspices of ILET (the Latin-American Institute for Transnational Studies) and the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, where the role of information in the new international order was discussed. The participants of this conference consisted of journalists and researchers from Third World and industrial countries. In one of the final documents it is noted:

"The development of a new international order in the area of information is an integral part of the endeavour to achieve a new international economic (and social) order. A just international order is a necessity for both poor nations and the industrialized world. Reaffirmation of political sovereignty and the struggle for economic liberation also extend themselves to the necessity for a new formula for the current flow of information." And: "Just as another authentic development toward international self-reliance is necessary in order to satisfy basic human needs, "another news" is necessary in order to reflect the actual developments in society. To realise this, sufficient conditions must be created which guarantee the access and the right to information, and which secure the cultural sovereignty of each society..." Accordingly, the final document states: "To this end it is important that Third World countries collectively design alternative information systems, which will remove current prejudices by presenting a more realistic picture of their situation. This is in agreement with a policy of total sovereignty over endogenous natural resources, and the realization of endogenous developmental models. With these the cooperation between Third World countries will become a legitimate and necessary instrument for the achievement of their sovereignty in the areas of information and culture." According to the participants, this process of change has already begun: "The non-aligned countries have already made noticable advances in the development of alternative information channels, both within and outside the Third World. This growing political consciousness as well as the measures taken in relation to information make it possible that the following meeting of non-aligned countries (in Sri Lanka, August 1976) be called the "Bandung of Information." (In

Bandung the first conference of non-aligned countries was held in April 1955, with 29 African and Asiatic nations participating. It is the first international manifestation of mutual solidarity among Third World countries.) Prior to going to 'Bandung', the Ministers of Information of the non-aligned countries convened in New Delhi, from 8 to 13 July 1976. There the 'pool' of press agencies of non-aligned countries was created. In the statutes of the 'pool', one finds the following among its aims: "to improve and expand mutual exchange of information", and, "the dissemination of correct and factual information about non-aligned countries." The statutes of the 'pool' were ratified in August, 1976, in Sri Lanka by the heads of state of the non-aligned countries. On this occasion it was stated that a new information order is as important as a new international economic order. Nevertheless, the only concrete decision made, apart from all verbal declarations, was in fact that there would be more co-operation between the national press agencies of a limited number of non-aligned countries. This is, in fact, the continuation of an initiative taken on January 29, 1965, when a series of bilateral contracts were concluded between the Yugoslav press agency, Tanjug, and the agencies of 17 non-aligned countries. The conferences of New Delhi and Colombo expanded this initiative and established a program which set guidelines for the mutual co-operation necessary to achieve a new information order. By the beginning of 1978, there were 32 press agencies from non-aligned countries associated with the 'pool' and their mutual news exchange proceeded via 5 regional coordination centers: Yugoslavia, Latin America, Tunisia, India and Sri Lanka.

1976 has been called the year of the new information order, and that is accurate in so far that from that year on an extensive international discussion developed in the media about the pros and cons of the suggested changes in the reigning international information structure. Many western media find that these changes imply a 'muzzling' of the press. Thus it is noted that "a major movement appears to be underway by Third World and Latin American countries, that would restrict the free flow of news reporting in and out of these areas and eventually replace it exclusively with government-controlled information". (International Herald Tribune, July 29, 1976.) Or one can interpret the Third World initiatives as an omen of "orwellian mind control on a continental scale". (Newsweek, September 6, 1976.)

There are, however, other opinions in the media, such as that of the French newspaper 'Le Monde', which partially acknowledges the criticism coming from the Third World. The Washington Post commented: "It must be galling to Third World people to see their newspapers, films, TV-shows and even their comic books either providing trivias and circuses, or, worse, promoting consumer and value models of slender relevance to their own societies". (November 12, 1976.)

1976 also was the year of the 19th General Conference of UNESCO, where the "free and balanced flow of information" played an important role. In the "Tunesian resolution", support is pleaded for Third World countries so that they can build their own information infrastructures. This resolution, which among other things implies financial support for the 'pool' of non-aligned news agencies, was almost unanimously accepted. Because of these initiatives, resolutions and comments, a discussion developed which was intensively continued during 1977, 1978 and 1979.

I have selected only its most important moments (up to the end of 1979).

- At the invitation of UNESCO, a conference took place in April, 1977 in Florence, Italy, where 138 journalists from 90 western, 18 East European and 30 Third World Countries discussed the international flow of information. No resolutions, decisions or recommendations were made. There was only an exchange of ideas. One of the participants noted: "There were few results because they (the participants) often tackled around one another and became very confused when they were required to contribute solutions to the problems."

Harry Lockfeer of the Dutch newspaper 'De Volkskrant' concluded: "It appears therefore of the utmost importance first to realize, by all available means, organizations and training programs which provide the Third World with a means of retaliation and with the possibilities to participate in the world information flow; and to organize in each country a better kind of journalism directed towards the national problems. That would certainly be an element towards developing a new world order in the area of information."

- In September, 1977 a very controversial meeting took place in Amsterdam: the ILET-seminar, concerned with "international communication and Third World participation". Journalists, researchers and government officials discussed two main points:

1. The current state of affairs with respect to Third World participation in international communication and,
2. suggestions for improved participation.

- In November 1977, the new information order was the theme of a discussion between journalists and scientists from Eastern and Western Europe (in Tampere, Finland). In this symposium, organized by the University of Tampere and the International Institute for Peace (Vienna), the central question asked was concerned with the possibility of international agreements, in order to regulate the activities of transnational information industries.

- In the same month the Third International Colloquium of the International Organization of Journalists (IOJ) met in Baghdad. The discussions were primarily devoted to the political, economic and cultural implications of the decolonization of information.

- From 3 to 5 November, the Italian Cinni-foundation too, organized a conference in co-operation with the International Press Institute and the magazine Affari Esteri. Circa 60 journalists participated in this meeting which took place in Venice. The theme was: "New perspectives in North-South communication." The newspaper 'Le Monde' suggested that 30 important international newspapers be regularly supplied with a supplement concerning the new economic - and information order.

- The Seventh General Meeting of the International Peace Research Association (IPRA) was held in Oaxtepec (Mexico) from 11 to 16 December, 1977. There, also, the new international information order was the topic of discussion. The papers and discussions were primarily concerned with the relationship between the new economic order and the information problem.

- In 1977 and 1978 the International Press Institute (IPI) also devoted attention to developments in international information, and specifically addressed itself to UNESCO. The 26th annual meeting (Oslo, June, 1977) of this association of publishers and editors-in-chief resolved to urge all UNESCO-countries to devote themselves to defending both the freedom of the press and the freedom of expression. The following annual meeting in March 1978 in Canberra directed much attention to the question of whether or not Western style journalism is appropriate for the Third World. In discussing this matter the disagreement with UNESCO once again emerges. The fear remains that the UNESCO machinery wants to push through a directive which does not exclude government interference with the media.

- During 1977 the activities of the World Press Freedom Development Committee began to take form. This com-

mittee, founded by a group of North American media managers, has, as one of its goals to make a contribution to the training of Third World journalists. By the end of 1977 the committee had 28 subdivisions on the five continents and worked together with organizations such as the Inter-American Press Association, the Press Foundation of Asia and the International Press Institute. These furnished financial aid for training projects in for example, Kenya and Trinidad. They also began collecting used broadcasting equipment and graphic machinery to be put at the disposal of Third World media. Moreover, the Third World media can also appeal for assistance to the group's 'manpower pool', a group of approximately 500 (mostly retired) North American journalists who are prepared to teach short-term courses in the tricks of the trade to their colleagues in the Third World. The committee further decided to finance a series of seminars about international communication. The first one met in Cairo (April, 1978), under the auspices of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy (Massachusetts).

Apart from this private initiative, there was some interest on the part of the U.S. government. In the latter part of 1977, a report was circulated among various departments and senators which was written by George Kroloff and Scott Cohen for the Committee on Foreign Relations of the U.S. Senate. In the introduction Kroloff and Scott note: "Whether we like it or not, there will be a "New World Information Order". It could be the driving force and the fuel for the "New World Economic Order" called for by the Less Developed Nations. The outlines of the "New World Information Order" are becoming clear. The blanks will be filled in during a series of international meetings in 1978 and 1979. These meetings for which the United States is totally unpre-

pared at this writing, could be as important as any others in this decade, because ... they will

- significantly shape the way people and nations will relate to each other;
- be a key factor in the development of future technology; and
- affect the actions of the US government".

At the end of the report the authors ask the following fundamental question of the American government:

- "1. How can the flow of information be increased to better all mankind without impinging upon personal privacy, proprietary data and national security ?
2. How can - or should - the Second and Third Worlds desire to rigidly control information sectors of their societies be accommodated, while trying to allow free flow of information worldwide ?
3. How can the US Government organize to protect our security, cultural and economic interests and also help meet the needs- and gain the cooperation- of the developing nations ?"

- In April, 1978, a meeting was called by the UNESCO appointed International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems, in Stockholm. Large and small press agencies, their clients, journalists' organizations and researchers discussed "the infrastructures of news collection and dissemination in the world". The Third World presented its well-known list of complaints about the functioning of large Western press agencies. The West retorted that the restrictions placed on journalists in the Third World seriously obstruct good reporting. The participants from the West nevertheless readily admitted that the Third World is at a disadvantage in terms of technical means and professional training. There were no objections raised to accepting

suggestions as to how to remedy this situation.

- Shortly after the meeting in Stockholm the same topic was discussed in Holland by approximately 50 specialists who had been invited to do so by the Netherlands UNESCO commission. The purpose of this exchange of ideas was to prepare and inform the Netherlands delegation to the 29th General Conference of UNESCO in October, 1978 in Paris.

- During 1977 and 1978 many conferences convened which concerned themselves primarily with the technological and financial aspects of the international supply of information. An important related point on the agenda was the reduction of telex and telephone tariffs for information traffic between Third World countries.

- During conferences in Jakarta and Havana (both in April, 1978) the non-aligned countries expressed their support for reinforcing the 'pool' initiative and for forceful action to be taken in order to realise a new information order.

- A highlight in the debate was the 20th General Conference of UNESCO held in Paris, November, 1978. The conference received the interim report of the International Commission for the study of communication problems. A resolution was adopted that supports the establishment of 'a more just and effective world communication and information order'. Also adopted was the 'Declaration of fundamental principles concerning the contribution of the mass media to strengthening peace and international understanding, the promotion of human rights and to countering racialism, apartheid and incitement to war'.

- Another important event was the combined UNESCO-IBI meeting held from 28 August to 6 September, 1978 in Torremolinos-Malaga, Spain. IBI is the International Bureau for Informatics and the meeting was the first Inter-governmental Conference on Strategies and Policies for Information (SPIN). The conference considered 'that

informatics is a phenomenon of global importance for mankind and that it requires the full cooperation of all countries in the implementation of coherent programmes which.....are in keeping with the requirements of the establishment of a new international economic order'.

- Journalists and media policy-makers met in a conference in Bonn (FRG), December 4-6, 1978. The conference 'Toward a new world information order: consequences for development policy' was organised by the Institute for International Relations and the Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation. Conference participants agreed that a new international information order has to be realised in order to achieve worldwide a free flow and a wider and better balanced dissemination of information. The conference expressed i.a. the need for the development of horizontal information exchange between the developing countries.

- Finally in 1978 the 33rd session of the UN General Assembly adopted on December 18 a resolution which 'affirms the need to establish a new, more just and more effective world information and communication order, intended to strengthen international peace and understanding and based on the free circulation and wider and better balanced dissemination of information'.

- At the beginning of 1979 journalists from the non-aligned countries met for the first time in Baghdad. The meeting took place from January 21-24 and prepared a final declaration in which the peoples, countries and institutions of the non-aligned movement are admonished that 'they must exert efforts to set up the basis for a new international information order to overcome the shortcomings in this field, which efforts are not permitted by imperialist circles, because they see in these the end of their domination and a blow to their control'.

- From February 5-14, UNESCO convened in Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia) the Intergovernmental Conference on Communication Policies in Asia and Oceania (the Asian counterpart

to the conference on communication policies in Latin America and the Caribbean that took place in San José, Costa Rica, 12-21 July, 1976). The conference expressed the 'need to establish a new, more just and more effective world information and communication order to redress the imbalanced flow of information between the developed and the developing countries'. It was also recognised that it is imperative for this new order to be of 'benefit to the masses of peoples in the developing countries'. Therefore it was recommended to UNESCO and other UN agencies 'to assist in the early establishment of research and development programmes designed to make available the necessary technology and expertise for the low-cost production of media equipment and materials so that the facilities of all media are available to and within the financial capacity of the average citizen of developing countries'.

- In September 1979 (3-8) the non-aligned summit met in Havana, Cuba and adopted a resolution on cooperation in the field of information and the media. 'The Conference considers that in order to establish the new international information order and to ensure a flow of information that is not one-way, it is vital to set up national information systems and media, to strengthen national information sources in areas of key importance for the social, economic and cultural development of each country and people and for their joint action at the international level, to train national personnel in each country with the assistance of the other members of the Non-Aligned Movement and of the international community.....'.

- In Tashkent a meeting of journalists and researchers from 46 countries took place from 3-8 September. This seminar sponsored by the USSR National Commission for UNESCO cautioned that 'the free flow of information is a grossly commercial concept serving the interests of

of transnational corporations, especially with the development of the new communication technologies such as satellite tele-communications and computer systems'.

The seminar concluded i.a. that 'appropriate national communication systems could only be established on the basis of endogenous social needs and efforts of the people'.

- 1979 was also the year of the general World Administrative Radio Conference, WARC, convened by the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) for ten weeks beginning September 24 in Geneva. Attended by delegates from 154 countries the assignment of the conference was to review and revise the electromagnetic spectrum. Issues debated were frequently allocations for satellite transmissions, access to satellite relays, High Frequency allocations, and sensing satellites.

- Finally in November (6-9) a UNESCO conference involving 31 nations took place behind closed doors in Washington. US Representative Roland Homet said about the conference 'The purpose of the meeting was to seek to define an international mechanism that could work effectively to advance shared goals of communications around the world'. He further commented that 'the search for a viable international institutional communications mechanism is worthwhile and should be continued'. The conference was a preparation for UNESCO's Intergovernmental Conference on Communication Development in Paris, April 14-20, 1980.

### C. Opposition against the new information order

One of the most striking characteristics of the international discussions and initiatives regarding the problems related to an international information order, is the one-sided attention paid to the phenomenon 'news'. The concept information is restricted to include only one aspect thereof, and the whole problem of information processing as well as its contribution to cultural synchronization is approached from this one aspect.

As a result, a serious misrepresentation of the problem occurs:

- In the totality of the international information exchange, the news holds only a modest place.
- In respect to the process of cultural synchronization, the news plays a much less important role than a whole series of other information processes, e.g. education, advertising, computer traffic, etc.
- Through the concentration on news the transnational industrial structure of the international supply of information threatens to fall into the background; because one only refers to the smaller part of the information business, while the hard core of the problem lies with those businesses having a far more vital economic interest in opposing a new information order.
- The result of this is that the problem is threatened with being reduced to a question of more transfer of Western technology and know-how and a greater access to Third World countries for Western journalists.
- Thus, the discussion is extracted from the context of international dependency relations and the necessity for a fundamental reordering of those relationships.

The merit of all the aforementioned conferences is

that it becomes increasingly clear which elements comprise the opposition to a new international information order (however that be interpreted).

They can be summarized in the following 10 points:

1. There is no acceptance of a relationship between a new international economic order and a new international information order. This, in effect denies that the problem is a structural politico-economic one.
2. The core of the problem is considered to be in the Third World itself (paucity of technical knowledge and resources). There is a willingness to solve these problems, under Western conditions.
3. One requirement is that the Western interpretation of the concept of free flow of information be maintained. This is deemed to be threatened by Third World initiatives.
4. It is proposed that these initiatives are authoritarian by nature, and under the pretext of aiding the Third World, there is, in fact, an attempt to undermine Western liberties.
5. The Western notion of professionalism must become the model to be followed; the presupposition still being that ideologically neutral techniques are involved.
6. The definition of information as a social good and of information dissemination as a public service must be discarded, because it is a detriment to the individual freedom of the information entrepreneur and his employees.
7. Proposals for reformation from Third World countries are seen as being necessarily influenced by governments and are therefore deemed unacceptable.
8. In connection with this, the suggestion to re-structure the international order is seen as being inspired by

communist, totalitarian regimes.

9. A new order of information processes implies that rights and privileges of information industries should be laid down in international agreements. This is rejected as an infringement of the freedom of information. Those who professionally distribute information are equated with all other citizens in the society, and therefore require no special regulations in order to fulfill their function.

10. When a new order requests a fundamental democratization of the information media, the opposition hereto is based on the argument that the influence of social groups on media content represents an infringement of the freedom of media content.

#### D. The acceptable new order

The 1978 UNESCO General Conference is a turning point in the debate in so far that at this meeting the opposition against a new information order is transformed into its unanimous acceptance. Kaarle Nordenstreng sees this acceptance as part of a strategic design geared towards achieving 'a stage of mutual accommodation in a spirit of compromise' (in "Struggle around the new international information order", a paper that was partly published in the Journal of Communication, Spring, 1979).

The likelihood of such a design is strengthened by the fact that at the meeting the key concept of the debate was reformulated. The original concept coined by the non-aligned movement (the "new international information order") was replaced by a 'new, more just and more effective world information and communication order'. It is unlikely that this is coincidental since the formula 'new international information order' (in its combination with the new economic order) stood for a challenge to

Western politico-economic interests: the global and fundamental reallocation of the infra-structures of international information flows and a qualitative change in the contents of these flows.

As US Ambassador John E. Reinhardt indicated at the UNESCO conference in his interpretation the new order would imply 'a more effective programme of action' including 'American assistance, both public and private, to suitably identified centers of professional education and training in broadcasting and journalism in the developing world' as well as 'a major effort to apply the benefits of advanced communications technology - specifically communications satellites - to economic and social needs in the rural areas of developing nations'.

In line with Reinhardt's statement is one of the resolutions adopted at the conference in which the Director-General is requested 'to intensify the encouragement of communications development and to hold consultations to lead to the provision of developing countries of technological and other means for promoting a free flow and a wider and better balanced exchange of information of all kinds'.

The 'new order' in its reformulation seems to be acceptable because it reduces the problems of international information mainly to the transfer of professional know-how, technology and financial resources.

Since 1978 the 'new order' has been accepted by Western governments and rather than maintaining the former critical attitude, there is an active desire 'to shape the future course of the new world order as co-architects' (John E. Reinhardt in 'Towards an acceptable concept of the new world information order', an address given at the US-Japan symposium, Boston, October, 1979).

The question is of course 'whose new order' is now so unanimously embraced and about to be implemented. As some US corporations have quickly understood the emphasis

on transfer of resources can be exploited as a welcome legitimation for Western market expansion. It can be hardly coincidental that immediately after the UNESCO meeting several large communications corporations advertised their goods and services to the Third World. Such as electronics manufacturer G.T.E.: 'One of the Third World's first needs is good communications. G.T.E. is in a unique position to help bring modern communications to these nations'. As the advertisement aptly says 'it is another demonstration of how we try to be in the right place at the right time for all our markets'.

The 'new world information and communication order' could very well be the world order of the transnational corporations (the 'corporate village' with international political blessing). A similar development seems possible as Karl Sauvant observes with regard to the new economic order 'with its reliance on transnational enterprises (it) is not likely to be a framework for a new and more equitable world economic order, but rather designed to stabilise the present order and thus contain a further deterioration of the position of the developing countries' (in his chapter on 'The role of transnational enterprise in the establishment of the new international economic order: a critical review', in *Strategies for the NIEO*, edited by Ervin Laszlo and Jorge A. Lozoya, Pergamon, 1979).

The expansion of international information flows will primarily benefit the networks of large transnational industrial and financial corporations. As Herbert Schiller notes 'Increased linkages, broadened flows of information and data, and above all, installation of new communication technology, are expected to serve nicely the world business system's requirements. That they can be considered as constituting a new international information order is so much additional icing on the cake of the transnationals' (in 'Whose new international economic and

information order?' a paper for the conference on Alternative Development Strategies and the Future of Asia, New Delhi, October, 1979).

E. The obstacles

1. This 'cosmetic response' (Phil Harris) to Third World demands could very well turn out to be the major obstacle to achieving a fundamental re-ordering of informational relations in the world.

This may be so because: it obscures the intrinsic relation between a new information and a new economic order and - more importantly - it leads away from a radical interpretation of these concepts.

As I have elaborated elsewhere the new international economic order could be defined as 'an organisation of international economic relations in which states, which develop their economic system in an autonomous way and with complete sovereign control of resources, fully and effectively participate as independent members of the international community'. In accordance with the definition of the new economic order the new international information order could be defined as: 'an international exchange of information in which states, which develop their cultural system in an autonomous way and with complete sovereign control of resources, fully and effectively participate as independent members of the international community'.

With this definition as a point of departure a policy towards implementing the new information order would seem to entail the following elements:

- The sovereign exploitation of the resource information demands that states design and implement national information policies and systems. These would have to be based upon the thorough exploration of available resources, the aspiration to

meet the basic socio-economic needs of the population, a wide-ranging public participation and decentralisation, the rejection of informational models inherited from foreign cultural systems and the development of endogenous models that creatively use local skill and knowledge.

- National self-reliance thus secured will be strengthened by collective self-reliance, based on the awareness that Third World countries - in complementing each other - have access to all the resources for a development independently from the present international system. The already available richness of resources needs to be identified and exchanged in an intensive, horizontal process. Resources can be exploited collectively; the sharing of facilities, exchange training-programmes, mutual transfer of technology. The establishment of such horizontal links would be an important step towards modification of the existing vertical links with the industrialised countries.
- National and collective self-reliance will provide the basis for participation in the international community. No longer will this be directed by the supplies of the world market, but by autonomously defined goals and priorities.

('The new international economic order and the new international information order', paper 34 for the International commission for the study of communication problems, UNESCO, 1979).

The key problem with the present coopting of the 'new order' formula is that such critical criteria as 'national and collective self-reliance, and national sovereignty' tend to disappear.

2. Obstacles to overcome are also a series of conflicts between such concepts as:

1. freedom versus sovereignty
2. responsibility versus autonomy
3. freedom of the press versus freedom of information
4. the professional 'guru' versus social participation
5. information as social criticism versus information as an instrument of social development.

1. When the first and third 'basket' of the final protocol of Helsinki (1975) are compared, it becomes clear that a conflict exists between the concepts freedom and sovereignty. Also conflicting in the international debate about the information order are the heated proponents of the 'free-flow' doctrine and the defenders of the national cultural sovereignty. The absoluteness of both standpoints is completely fruitless. The principles need not necessarily be mutually exclusive, since each country in practice limits that which might possibly detract from its sovereignty. The example of the U.S. is the most convincing, because it is there that freedom of information is so fanatically defended. During the UNESCO debate concerning the direct transmission of TV-programs from one country - via satellite to another, it was determined that the receiving country must first give permission for the programs entry. The U.S. were the only country opposing this guideline. Nevertheless, the Federal Communications Commission in the U.S. has placed severe restrictions on the use of broadcasting in its own nation. An attempt by, for example China or the Soviet Union to directly transmit TV to the American public would no doubt meet with restrictions, and would perhaps even be made impossible. Or, when for example, a Canadian TV-company would wish to transmit pornographic programs via satellite to the U.S., the government in Washington would immediately forbid it. In other words: The U.S. wish to have the right to "prior consent", but have no wish to extend this right to others.

2. A characteristic of a professional group is its autonomy compared to any other group. This especially pertains to the group of professional communicators. Based on this autonomous position, there is often a strong resistance to accepting rules which tie practicing the profession to certain social criteria. Nevertheless, it is exactly this freedom and the importance of the profession of communicator which make it necessary that this profession be practiced within the context of social responsibility. Arguing for regulations of the international information exchange does not infringe upon professional autonomy, but promotes it. This is certainly the case when the professional group itself decides on such regulations and accepts them as binding. Such regulations will not only establish the responsibility towards society, but will also provide protection against intervention by government or industrial clients.

3. The aforementioned automatically leads to another conflict, specifically that between the freedom of the mass media and the information freedom of the citizen in a society. In the existing information structures, and this applies to both capitalist and socialist systems, the freedom of the media exceeds that of the citizen. This is noteworthy, as in almost every country the freedom of information of the citizen is fundamental (and even constitutional). The US offers a good example of a society, in which the freedom of the media is deduced from the general freedom of information. In the Constitution the right of the citizen to knowledge and to the expression of opinion is fundamental, and the media freedom must honour this right. Thus, the freedom of information for the citizen is also a guarantee against the possibility that the media use this freedom against him/her. Each society must design its own mechanisms to adequately handle this conflict.

4. Whenever the freedom of the media is in the service of the information freedom of the citizen, the communicator is no longer the 'guru', but becomes a part of the society. In connection with this Jean Schwoebel of Le Monde has said, that you cannot leave information dissemination only to journalists. It is like the case of the religious faith which is too important to be left to theologians only. In the debate about the new information order, the emphasis is placed upon the social nature of information. Who ever reads pure state control into this, does not see that it is essential for a society that information dissemination and processing is a process of collaboration between various social groups, inclusive of professional communicators.

5. Finally, there are two standpoints in unprofitable opposition to one another; the first of which sees information purely as the critical accompaniment to social processes and institutions, the other sees it as a critiqueless instrument of the social developmental process. In the first view it must be noted that an ideal is placed in opposition to the reality. Even in nations where "freedom of information" reigns, the media almost always function as a support of the dominant politico-economic structures and those interests invested therein. Critical social control rarely is present even in the free media. On the other hand, it must be noted that in many Third World countries this critical control is completely absent, because they tend, in a delicate and threatened developmental process, to expel criticism which does not fit the national philosophy. This conflict could, however, be relieved in both situations when the media could engage critically and constructively in the social emancipatory process.

3. An obstacle in the present debate is also the emphasis placed on the concept 'balance'. This is in fact very misleading! It points at the necessity for Third World countries to catch up with Western quantities and qualities of information by way of integrating in the present system, albeit on more equal footing.

A new international information order, however, stands for an information exchange in which all parties participate with inputs and outputs that are appropriate to their particular situations and not necessarily balanced in quantity or quality with the inputs and outputs of the others.

A new international information order stands for a system of non-hierarchical relations between participating nation-states: a balanced system is not necessarily non-hierarchical.

4. A further obstacle is the fact that a majority of discussions concerning the new information order is located in political fora. In order to transform the present order into a new international information order at least three political steps are needed:

1. In most Third World countries fundamental political changes are necessary that would lead to socio-political structures in which the informational needs of all people can be expressed.
2. Governments of Western governments will have to more strictly control the activities of their transnational corporations (including the communications corporations).
3. Governments of socialist countries will have to be prepared to cooperate towards decisive changes in the economic and technological infra-structure of international information.

With these steps the core of the matter is a political problem: the necessity to drastically change policies of present political regimes. Most international fora - whose membership constitutes the political establishment - can by definition not negotiate this.

5. In addition there are such evident obstacles as caused by present financial, technical, professional, commercial and political structures. Although the movement towards a new information order must imply much more than their transformation, they are certainly part of the problems to be removed if one wants to improve information flows from the Third World. Briefly described these obstacles are:

Financial: as in the case of the high costs of international news transmission. Present commercial tariffs for telecommunications are beyond the capacity of the average news agency in a Third World country.

Technical: in many Third World countries the required technical infra-structures, such as telexmachines, satellite-frequencies, computer networks, lack although they are prerequisites for participation in the international information circuit.

Professional: in many Third World countries a sufficient educational structure lacks for the training of information professionals;

in many Western media there is a lack of professional interest for Third World matters;

in many cases professional conceptions of what constitutes relevant information, differ widely.

Commercial: the information from the Third World may be considered to have no market-value, a crucial consideration for profit-oriented media.

Political: governments in the Third World may by various measures seriously restrict the flow of information from their countries;

information from the Third World may also not pass the political judgement of the Western gatekeeper.

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