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Seminar: The role of information
in the new international
order

Mexico City, 24 -- 28 May, 1976

MASS COMMUNICATIONS, THE NEW INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC ORDER
AND ANOTHER DEVELOPMENT

Notes on Myths, Realities and Methods

By · Reginald Herbold Green

The ability to command, direct and select information can become a source of power comparable with that of large natural, technological and economic resources.

- Wilbur Schramm, 1974
USA-LA Journalists Conference

A near monopoly of international communications - including those among Third World countries - by transnational corporations, linked to their domination of many and influence in almost all Third World country media, is a basic element of the present hierarchical pattern of centre ideological and cultural domination.

- What Now, 1975 Dag Hammarskjold Report

The Third World nations must protect themselves from the distortion of their cultures and ways of life implicit in present communications dependence. Information is a non-material commodity that is bought and sold in a highly oligopolistic market. This must be changed.

- 1975 Third World Journalists Forum, Dag Hammarskjold Foundation

It is not enough to set tasks, we must also solve the problem of method, for carrying them out. If our task is to cross a river, we cannot cross it without a bridge or a boat ... Unless the problem of method is solved, talk about the task is useless.

- Chairman Mao Tse Tung

Communications and Development

Examination of the role of communications in development has suffered from five major weaknesses. First, the communications theory side - i.e. the theory and analysis of how and in what form which knowledge is transferred when, from whom and to whom, why and with what results - has been inadequately explored. Second, the nature of communications as a business tool and as a business sector

has been even less well explored. Third, studies seeking to link the knowledge and business aspects are even rarer and tend either to treat the economic implications as trivial or to be standard micro-economic case studies almost devoid of consideration of the special nature and indirect effects of the product. Fourth, attempts to turn mass communications into a New International Economic Order agenda item for dialogue and serious negotiation, for co-operative action among South countries and institutions and, when necessary (when, not if), confrontation are noticeable by their near absence. Fifth, mystical incantations about "freedom of the press" (often by such intriguing champions as ITT or Daniel Moynihan) suffuse the area in clouds of incense and tear gas which do nothing to further the right to be informed, the right to self information or the examination of institutional arrangements consistent with either.

No one exploration can make a systematic assault on this series of obstacles. What can be attempted is a brief examination of some of the major knowledge and development, communications and business and freedom for whom and why issues together with a slightly more detailed agenda for Mass Communications as a NIEO agenda area. The concentration on news agencies and international mass communications channels in no way implies that other institutions, domestic communications channels and specialised knowledge transfer, use and creation are less important - only that to talk intelligibly of means requires some limitation in the range of tasks addressed.

Communications Present: Selectively and Interpretatively

Communications present events, values, possibilities, means. These are interlocked functions. For example, an article on the MPLA's victories in Angola presented events - a series of battles, of post battle reorganisations, of the geographic extension of power outward from Luanda toward the territorial limits of Angola. It also presented and appealed to values. For example, the labelling of the MPLA as "Russian backed" or UNITA as "South African advised" or FNLA as "tribal, CIA supported" (not, so far as the writer knows, all in any one account) seeks to convey a value judgement and to appeal to values in the reader. (This particular triad would have had negative implications as to the Africanness of any of the antagonists) Less overtly, stress on unification or of restoration of civil organisation - or per contra on killings - would have

presented values and at least tentative value judgements. At least implicitly, it presented the possibility of organising a state after a disorderly colonial withdrawal, in the face of separatist tendencies, despite (and/or making selective use of) external intervention. Perhaps less directly, it also presented means - guerilla warfare, ideological training, heavy weapons, foreign allies, international recognition - for realising the possibilities.

Almost any piece of communications includes all four presentations. In the case of mass communications the overt emphasis is on the first or the first and second, but the latter two are rarely totally absent. In specialised communications - e.g. on borehole drilling techniques, the dominant presentation is of means but the means are related to possibilities (of providing water for some purpose) and not free from value implications (e.g. boreholes - in contrast to wells or spring protection - embody values of modernisation, centralisation, high technology, exports, imports).

Communications inform, not simply in the sense of telling about but the deeper one of shaping perceptions of - and thereby altering the nature of - internal and external reality. They shape the reader's self image. Constant emphasis on the external allies of Angolan movements and emphasis in a form implying that they were dominant and the Angolan's clients could hardly avoid influencing African readers' views of themselves and their societies' relations with foreign power centres. They shape outsiders' images of those presented in the communications - very negatively in respect of most articles on Angola in respect of European images of Angolans. To the extent Angolans read such articles their image of Europeans (not excluding the journalists) was also informed by them. In each case - self image, image of self to others, image of others to self - the informing does not simply present reality - indeed it may do that very partially or inadequately. It also alters reality because it influences action. For example, much transfer of technology writing centring on patents informs Third World thinking by making patents seem central to knowledge transfer (highly dubious), the alteration of the present system desirable (valid) and such alteration the logical centrepiece of a nationally oriented technological policy (totally inaccurate, objectively speaking). Therefore, they reinforce belief in dependence, concentrate efforts to secure reform on one (probably secondary) front, and push more critical efforts (copying and adapting, developing new technology, South-South joint efforts, manpower and institution building) out of the centre of consciousness.

Thus, no matter how intended (and the intentions are often very much anti-dependent and pro-liberation) they may well inform toward continued dependence.

Both presenting and informing include selecting and interpreting as integral components. The unselected, uninterpreted communication is not a communication at all because its volume prevents its physical, let alone mental, transportation and its lack of focus and linkage to known guidepost events or concepts makes it wholly or largely unintelligible.

Objectivity, therefore, cannot be pursued through the absence of selection and/or interpretation. It can be pursued through the presentation of facts and interpretations inconsistent with the main selection/interpretation foci of the communication or by an explicit indication of the selection/interpretation procedures and values used. Each approach has limits - especially in mass communications and for readers with limited alternative sources of presentation and information. However, each is at least practicable and based on a perception of the nature of the problem.

The problems of selection are bias and incompleteness to the point of inadequacy. In the Angolan instance, "lack" of mention of South African (or Cuban or Zairean) military forces would be an example as would failure to indicate in broad terms what their role at different points in Angola and in time was. Problems of interpretation relate largely to hidden biases (or values) of the communicator and/or the suppression of data inconvenient to expressed values. The suppression variant is a joint selection/interpretation issue, e.g. the avoidance of all mention of South African troops in Angola and the inclusion of only vague references to foreign military personnel or per contra standard reference to Cuban troops as advisors with no mention of combat roles or appearances outside Luanda. Hidden judgements would arise in the way the relationship of the Angolan movement to its allies was evaluated and the way in which the foreign presence's results were analysed - e.g. the MPLA-Cuban relationship was not that of the independent "Flying Column" - UNITA one and neither was similar to "Colonel Kallan's" with the FNLA.

Again, it is not possible to achieve objectivity by suppressing the communicator's values. To discuss the uses and dangers of the Cuban forces to the MPLA (today to the Government of Angola) requires a set of views on why they were sought, what the Angolan Government seeks to achieve, how these goals relate to the independent objectives in respect of the future of Angola

(if any) of the Cuban Government. Nobody can have the needed knowledge and views and be free from value judgements on the issues involved. At most one can expect avoidance of selective suppression or distortion of fact and a clear indication of the communicator's values.

Even this brief survey of the interaction of communications and development indicates that one cannot treat information solely as a standard commodity. Its presenting and informing aspects are far broader. Even if an automobile does present values and inform the perceptions of owners and aspirants it does so less than mass communications and automobiles are probably the physical goods which are closest to being communication media in their own right. The primary concern cannot be the immediate financial cost of securing the information.

Similarly, selection and interpretation are quite different in relation to communication than to material products or most services. The selection of a pump with specified technical and use properties and the interpretation (testing) of its performance pose other and simpler problems. There are overlaps - luxury consumer goods and grand (or grandiose) public structures do have a communications as well as a direct cost impact but not to the same degree.

Power, Profit and Property

However, there is a very real sense in which communications are power, profit and property. Knowledge has become at least as basic and important a form of property as specific physical assets and is increasingly interlocked with generalised financial assets or access to them. To argue that knowledge capital is moving toward dominance over finance capital may be an over-statement but it is neither a whimsical nor an inherently anti-Marxian one.

The amount spent on research and development, market studying and manipulating and planning departments, the rise of specialist knowledge packaging and sale bodies including but by no means limited to those associated with mass media (e.g. McKinsey, A.D. Little, as much as UPI, Warner Communications, and UNESCO) and the rising share in TNC surpluses of open payments for knowledge via royalties, fees and management contracts and concealed payments via transfer pricing should be enough to demonstrate that knowledge is big business and its organisers, packagers, purveyors and access limiters, very powerful entrepreneurs and managers. If knowledge can be

created, controlled, realised with a surplus it is - in a Marxian sense - clearly capital even if in a form very different from merchant, manufacturing or finance capital. Evidently, a condition for knowledge being power, property or profit is that once created it be controlled by a limited number of proprietors with access at prices and under conditions yielding a surplus and an influence on (or control over) the subsequent purchasers (or renters) and users. That condition is met for most knowledge today - the cost of entry into the knowledge creation, application, transportation and leasing or selling businesses is high and most branches of the industry are highly oligopolised.

Knowledge based capitalism is, of course, not limited to mass communications. IBM's chief assets are the capacity to create, adapt, promote and realise with a surplus hard and soft technology, not the particular physical assets which embody fragments of the knowledge production and realisation process. Maubeni's worldwide trading business turns not on particular stocks or even access to finance per se but on detailed, owned (i.e. not available to others, for whatever reasons) capacity to generate and collect commercial and financial knowledge.

Erickssen is an example similar to IBM but closer to mass communications. However, the closeness may be as deceptive as informative. The impact of equipment supply on the nature of communications can be real - e.g. studio bound TV equipment does create a bias to hierarchy, centralisation, limited access in contrast to portable, simple apparatus suitable for participatory, on the spot programming - but this is far from exactly correlated with the nature of the supplier. The real French influence - for good or otherwise - on Algerian TV is not via the rather overpriced and less than ideal equipment but in the transfer (largely via "free" and commercial "technical assistance") of patterns of institutional structure, programme strategy and design, relations with viewers, sources of "information" based on the French model. This incidentally illustrates the fact that technical assistance is the most penetrative and potentially dominating form of "aid". The evident French view that the ideal is to provide the ta and let others provide the finance to implement the patterns of dependence implanted by systematic ta provision is based on perfectly sound analysis from the French point of view and implies a perfectly sound counter analysis from a periphery centred viewpoint.

Press agencies are a field in which the business and communications

aspects are much more integrally linked. Their product is quite overtly selected and interpreted knowledge. Their micro interest in profit requires continued dependence on them by the periphery buyers - unlike IBM they have no easy line of retreat from machine to plant to finance to total knowledge package to selected knowledge input ownership. Further, their solidarity with other centre institutions both overtly and covertly, consciously and unconsciously makes them both conveyor belts for and architects of dependence and domination.

If this is a valid - even if partial - presentation of certain critical elements of reality why is it unusual enough to appear cranky and annoying enough to attract conservative, liberal, social democratic and socialist/New Left derision and obloquy? Several factors seem to be at work.

This viewpoint is clearly one opposed to the perceived interests of communications enterprises and the classes associated with them. Both their external defence of interests and their internal defence of a creditable self image require its dilution or denial.

Because the most effective uses of communications property is in conjunction with physical and financial it is easy to assume that physical or financial property is dominant and knowledge property dependent or peripheral. Recently a Shell director spoke of his company's basic strength as ability to organise, direct, develop a range of related operations in different parts of the world and to raise outside funds on the basis of that ability but - quite sincerely - denied that his company was in the process of transition from the physical oil extraction - transport - processing business to the energy knowledge creation - application - control - merchanting business.

This barrier is reinforced because the relative role of knowledge capital - never insignificant but rarely exercised in a manner independent of or co-equal with physical capital in the past - has grown very rapidly over 1950-1975 probably involving such major quantity changes as to imply a qualitative transformation as well. This is a transition parallel with and linked to that from colonialism to neo-colonialism as the dominant imperial (and from some viewpoints social imperial) mode but one which is less readily apparent on the surface of events.

Mystification - conscious or not - also plays a role. The 100th Anniversary of Alexander Graham Bell's first telephone call features the isolated, struggling scientist not the entrepreneurial

millionaire nor the beneficiary TNCs. The Bureau for the Protection of Intellectual Property Rights projects itself as the champion of the backroom inventor and poor author not - as is objectively the dominant reality - of the ITT's and Warner Communications of this world. Discussion of "freedom of the press" turns on the achievements of Woodward and Bernstein and the threats of closed shops not of the FLN's transformation of the Algerian press and publishing sectors or the implications of the ownership of the (London) Times by a conglomerate business empire or the "self denial" imposed by dependence on advertising revenues. All are real instances and issues - the myth is based on the pattern of selection.

"Conspiracy" is the opposite form of mystification. Whatever else it is, it is an anti-Marxian explanation. Conspiracies are either secondary influences usually reversed when they are perceived as threatening basic elite interests - e.g. the rise and fall of the Nixon Junta, the disillusion which led to the breaking of Messrs. Bundy and McNamara with the "Vietnam Conspiracy" presented in the Pentagon Papers, the very real capitalist and capitalist press ambivalence in respect of General Pinochet - or events which are made successful by their congruence with particular objective conditions and interests - e.g. William of Orange's conspiracy succeeded because his objective class base was totally different from the Duke of Monmouth's even though their apparent appeals to principle and their conspiratorial nature were superficially similar.

Ex-post social science research also mystifies. It - especially in its more mathematical forms - has a grave bias toward explaining and projecting the details of the past not the underlying forces which inform altered present and altering future details. This is remarkably true of almost all TNC micro (and much macro) research.

A crude productionism also hampers serious analysis. Whatever Adam Smith and Karl Marx meant by their classification of education as not directly productive, they clearly were not talking about a process in which knowledge was overtly produced, owned and realised with a surplus. To argue otherwise is to engage in a very sterile type of theological textual exegesis in which "the letter killeth" and the "spirit giveth life" is resolutely ignored. The reaction to this form of primitive productionism is - not surprisingly - often to argue not merely that knowledge creation, communication and application is productive but also that it has nothing much in common with the production of physical goods which the "productionist" mythologisers turn into potent fetishes.

A final barrier to understanding the Power-Property-Profit axis underlying communications today is crude reductionism. The - initially narrowly based - press erosion of the mass and self image of the Nixon Junta (with very odd self imposed limitations on who and how many people and institutions were to be challenged how deeply e.g. the extraordinarily privileged status of Mr. Secretary Kissinger at least until late 1975) cannot be sensibly read solely or even primarily in terms of a Washington Post quest for profit nor a bourgeoisie elite prior decision to dump Nixon as bad for business.

Clearly not all journalists are witting - or even unwitting - tools of property interests. For example, on Angola the Observer's coverage has been partly informed (apparently in the face of other influences) by David Martin's basically pro-liberation, anti-hierarchical and - given his perceptions of Angola - therefore necessarily pro-MPLA reporting which is of a piece with his earlier scathing analyses and critiques of the basically pro-subjugation, inherently externally informed and dependent ruling elites centred on Colonel Micombero of Burundi and Field Marshal Amin, V.C. of Uganda.

However, most cases of this type arise either when an elite or - a fortiori - a fraction of an elite has gone beyond the overall elite - mass perceptions of legitimate means and/or when a major crisis makes communications attention profitable and the individual experts include some whose allegiance to communications is based on principles different from (or even antagonistic to) those of the knowledge entrepreneurs. Further, to a degree and within limits, the knowledge magnates in the mass communication are influenced by the myths of a free press and open access to information.

A crusading reporter or an agency campaign against the Pinochet regime is possible (indeed on occasion happens) - a systematic dismantling of the power over, property in, profit from information triad on which the press agencies and communications conglomerates undertaken by the beneficiaries is inconceivable. The secondary characteristics arising from competition, individual influences, the partial power of their own myths over the press potentates and the need to compromise on details to preserve essentials are secondary features and contradictions; critical and useful if seen and used as such but dangerously mystifying if confused with underlying trends and principles.

Communications In The Old International Economic Order

Communications are integral to, as well as integrated, in the Old International Economic Order (OIEO). They are hierarchical, controlled at - by - for the centre, penetrative of the periphery, used to insure centre mediation of presentation and information flows from one segment of the periphery to another.

South-South direct contact would be corrosive of Centre dominance if direct. It can be a useful adjunct if inter-mediated by the Centre. Press agency reports on Tanzania can, for example, be used to prove in Chile that the Unidad Popular was a mistake and that Freiite approaches inevitably led to it and an equally selective interpretation of Chile combined with the Tanzanian for use in Malaysia or Sri Lanka. The more the actual communicators have internalised values consistent with the selection and interpretation, the more effective the intermediation will be.

In the Press Agency field, the nature of penetrative, centre based hierarchies hardly needs assertion. UPI, API, AFP, Reuters and (in a special sub-category) Tass - all are centre based in selection, interpretation, presentation but all are global in terms of collection of data and of revenue. Few other lines of production are quite as closely and narrowly oligopolised with such a gap between the leaders and the secondary follower, specialised competitor, and basic alternative competitors. IBM's dominance vis a vis Burroughs is very much less than UPI's vis a vis Tanjug and Prensa Latina and the real differences between what IBM and Burroughs offer are - at least in many sub-areas of relevance to peripheral economies - much greater than between UPI and Reuters.

Press agencies are not merely a part of a homogenous structure of centralised hierarchical dominance and dependence. They have special characteristics (or roles or functions). They limit (by provision and by exclusion) both mass and elite knowledge of other masses and elites. They inform elite perceptions of "their own" and other masses and vice versa. They provide the base from which more specialised information flows can be developed, e.g. in Tanzania the nature of mass communications results in some general knowledge of possibly relevant technology breakthroughs at the centre but not elsewhere on the periphery. This selection of data creates a partial perception on the part of Tanzanians seeking to locate and procure specialised communications and thereby reinforces intellectual, institutional and technological dependence even in

respect of readers who can identify and filter out many of the biases of the agencies in respect of presentation of events as such.

Areas and Institutional Forms of Communication

The totality of communications (knowledge transfer) can be divided in a binary manner between mass and specialised communication. However, the latter is subject to almost infinite subdivisions. A more operationally useful typology might include: pedagogic and academic, hard technological and soft technological, operational analysis and policy (within an agreed decision taking frame) and decision taking.

That typology leads to implications as to possible roles for universities and professional bodies, research institutes and research producing/consuming units (e.g. directly productive enterprises, government institutions), government analytical units and technocrats, political decision takers. It may also suggest the nature of communications media (including face to face contact) and forums for providing them which are appropriate. While likely to benefit from a more careful study of the techniques of mass media and certainly needing to make a selective use of them (especially in pedagogic communication which can - e.g. in Tanzania's nationwide radio-discussion group-action education programme Mtu ni Afya (man is health) - involve mass participation, mass communication, participatory groups and pedagogy in an integrated whole) specialised communications are quite different from mass media and to outline and analyse fully their special requirements would require several additional papers.

The institutional forms of mass communications are in essence surprisingly similar to other production lines with the partial distinguishing feature of greater integration of production/distribution at the retail/individual factory level as exemplified by the single newspaper, radio or television station. Beyond that basic unit one has small to middling conglomerates seeking economies of scale in linking same product units (e.g. several newspapers or television stations) and/or several producers of similar but differentiated products (e.g. the Washington Post group including that paper, part of the International Herald Tribune, Newsweek, several television and radio stations, a news service). At the TNC level stand the mass producers/packagers/wholesalers like Warner Communications and the more specialised collectors/processors/

merchants exemplified by the main press agencies and the global advertising agencies.

As in any other line of production there are specialised service units of various kinds and linkages with related fields including production of the capital and intermediate goods related to the main line of production. Thus the New York Times owns a pulp and paper company while the group of companies surrounding RCA is involved in radio and television equipment production as well as in radio and television programme production and station operation.

Again as in other lines of production only a few of the single producer/retailers (and probably none in the Third World private sector and next to none in the public) have much autonomy or individual bargaining power. The Post group obviously does but the typical press agency dependent "independent" newspaper or the network/programme packager dependent "locally owned" television station most emphatically does not. That power and property are not synonymous with base unit ownership is especially clear in mass communications - Press Agencies in general do not own newspapers nor is the basic business of TV Networks/Programme packagers the operation of stations.

Mass Communication "Third Worldism", "Proletarian Internationalism" and "Another Development"

The issues of Third World collective and national autonomy in respect of and control over communications and those of communications in the service of "another development" as sketched either by President Nyerere, in the 1975 Dag Hammarskjold Report or by Chairman Mao (the sketches are of course by no means identical but are united in their opposition to the "modernising", hierarchic, growth maximising, departicipatory orthodoxes of Washington and - despite not inconsiderable differences - Moscow), are not identical. The present system is quite inconsistent with any autonomous, quasi autonomous or balanced interdependence strategy whether authoritarian national capitalist, neo-social democratic, authoritarian state capitalist, authoritarian or participatory transition to socialist in elite ideology, decision taking group class orientation and evolution of class interaction and roles.

The reasons why these diverse ideological strategic and interest positions would support and seek - with varying degrees of priority and acceptance of costs - change are by no means the

same in principle but may be in short and medium term specifics. Latina is not an ally of the press agencies (as well as a marginal competitor) simply because it groups bourgeoisie newspapers, but because their stance is one of comprador or junior partner dependent capitalists. Equally the nature and aims of Indian, Senegalese and Tanzanian government hostility toward agency domination of international mass communications are only partially congruent.

This particular cross cleavage - if one likes on Centre-Periphery and Class lines - is by no means limited to the field of communications. It is critical in all areas of Centre-Periphery relationships. "In Unity Is Strength" can be read as justifying rather simplistic "Third Worldism" or equally reductionist variants on "Proletarian Internationalism" (or for that matter "Bourgeoisie Internationalism"). The contradiction is a real one. Centre states dominate by virtue of objective material considerations, the reality that class relations are mediated through nation states and the fact that the international economic system is capitalist and therefore even CMEA "socialist division of labour" is in practice a variant on "TNC division of labour". To assert that Cuban dependence on the USSR in 1975 is identical to (or as warping and stagnating as) Cuban dependence on the USA in 1955 is evident nonsense, but to assert that Cuba is radically closer to economic independence, balanced interdependence or a basically "inward looking" development strategy is far from claiming the self evident.

As an interim collective negotiating tactic in the field of mass communications "proletarian internationalism" seems to have severe limitations. The number of Third World (especially Latin American) countries who could be marshalled under this banner is not adequate to give much unity or strength. The inclusion of China would not be all that useful at this stage on this front. The (alternative) inclusion of the USSR might make for greater specific gains but at the price of mixing shifting of dependence with genuine reduction.

A broader Third World front (evidently excluding cases like South Africa and Chile and unable to include the three peripheral states which demonstrate massive false national consciousness i.e. Australia, New Zealand, Canada) is quite clearly an exercise in organising along the lines of a secondary but antagonist contradiction because the potentially attainable short term gains are consistent with divergent

longer term objectives. It is therefore somewhere between a tactical and an interim strategic approach. Freedom lies in the correct understanding of necessity - at this particular point in time and in this field "collective self reliance" seems likely to be a more serviceable banner even if the troops rallying to it are rather disparate.

Mass communications and "another development" have four broad areas of interaction. Self image (including collective self image) is critical to the increased consciousness and altered patterns of goals necessary not simply to alter development strategy but to make "self reliance" and "mass participation" bottom up realities instead of the top down elitist models they so often are today (especially in the hands of the odd neo-liberal/neo-Platonist/neo-Trotskyite theorists so common in the intellectual "new left" sects). Own image of others is equally critical. Neither national South liberation from Northern dominance nor collective South-South interaction can be firmly based until South perceptions of the North and of each other are altered. Northern perceptions of the South are in equal need of alteration - e.g. the more convinced the North is that "collective self reliance" is a real force backed by a real will and capacity to confront, the more likely are serious North-South negotiations. Finally at least in the context of another development mass communication merges into mass applied education and mass provision of data for decision taking and action - e.g. the Tanzania "Mtu ni Afya" campaign cited earlier led to measurable changes in health practices, one of the most dramatic of which was the construction of 750,000 latrines from local decisions by local personnel in the context of mass communications' advocacy and transmission of data.

It can certainly be argued that a rapid reduction in the centre dominance of international and penetration of domestic periphery mass communications is a necessary condition for a sustained transition to "another development". It can equally be asserted that it is a facilitating (albeit not a necessary) condition for beginning such a transition. What is self-mystifying is to suppose that it is a sufficient condition.

How Much Reality: Presented By and For Whom?

The problem of what to present how is a real one. A mirror image of North mass communications would certainly be different in the territorial location and sometimes the class position of those it served. But it would remain inherently hierarchical, manipulative and anti-participatory. Ultimately the speeches of President Amin and Ambassador Moynihan to the 1975 UN General Assembly were very similar - both were exercises in the use of hyperbolic, selective communication as disinformation. Whether one agrees with their basic values, specific facts, lines of reasoning or tactical effects the official Tanzanian critique of the Amin regime on the occasion of the 1975 Organisation of African Unity Summit and the continuing series of reports, comments, criticisms, presentations of dialogues as well as pronouncements, problems and contradictions as well as syntheses and successes, on worker self management by El Moujahid in Algeria are ultimately totally different from the Amin-Moynihan strategy and practice.

There are no easy answers. Order and liberation, detailed knowledge of problems and dedication to purposive change, participatory diversity and unified commitment, self criticism and both external and self images do pose an infinite number of concrete contradictions the interim syntheses for whose resolution must be equally concrete as to time, place, historic setting, major immediate contradictions, strategy and tactics of struggle. To pretend otherwise is to mystify, normally for the status quo and for hierarchicalism and against change and participatory liberation. The failure to face this set of problems squarely and operationally is probably one of the major cultural and political dependencies that Eurocentric penetration and imitation (of the USSR as well as of the USA, UK or France) has exercised over the peoples, states, parties, communications media of the periphery.

There are two fairly clearcut subissues: credibility and consistency. To claim a problem does not exist or that a change of policy is no such thing when reality is palpably the reverse, as perceived by the reader, is counterproductive. For example early 1974 statements by the National Milling Corporation that there was no grain shortage in Dar es Salaam did not convince the thousands in queues that they were able to buy grain but rather that the NMC's (accurate) claims that corrective measures were in hand, nobody would starve and hoarding only worsened problems were also lies.

Per contra the April-June measures to cut imports, raise prices, raise lower level wages and former prices to protect low income purchasing power, distribute massive grain supplies free in drought hit areas, raise taxes could be perceived as a whole because of quite frank analysis of the drought-food import price-industrial economy inflation-oil price crisis as it affected Tanzania, of the very real hardships this would impose, and of how the policies sought to minimise (not eliminate) costs to the poorer workers and peasants and to the development dynamic. The result was greater credibility, solidarity and support than would have flowed from a Panglossian "best of all worlds", "wisest of all leaders" piece of disinformation.

Consistency is also critical. If *la lotta continua*, power to the people, decentralisation, participation in decision taking are to be operating principles not the mystical myths of an elite controlled, centralised, manipulative, technocratic (including political and ideological technocrats not just managers and bureaucrats) system, communications must be far more two way, accessible to the masses, problem and contradiction posing and opposed to secretism than is now the case in any state and totally different in these respects from the standards of most states - capitalist or socialist, centre or periphery - today. In that context China's big character posters, el Moujahid's critical analytical features, Tanzania's often ruthlessly honest Budget Speech analyses of necessity and presentations of the intended uses of freedom are initial, partial explorations of the way forward.

However, if the elite cadre view of domestic struggle (whether a la Plato, Simon Bolivar and Sir Arthur Lewis or a la some strands in Lenin, Stalin and most "New Left" fractions) and centralised proletarian or anti-proletarian internationalism view of global struggle (whether a la Henry Kissinger's addresses to the 7th Special Session on - i.e. against - NIEO and to the US Ambassadors against the Berlinguer-Marchais "historic temporary synthesis" doctrine or a la the Brezhnev Doctrine and the quest for a revived "Holy Office" to prosecute Maican and Berlinguerian heresy) are correct, then a very different set of communications institutions, practices, principles is necessary. A power to the people mass communications sector in the USSR would be as cancerous for that system as it would have been essential to the different socialist system which briefly struggled for emergence in Czechoslovakia. Equally a "free press" even on bourgeois liberal principles cannot be accepted by the

present Brazilian or Chilean regimes whereas the failure to work out (over the decades before achieving partial and compromised power) and implement a transition to socialism variant was a factor contributing to the weaknesses, internal contradictions and ultimate elite overthrow of the Unidad Popular in Chile.

These are not issues which can be "solved" by theory divorced from practice. They are issues on which the long term, general effects of overtly short term, specific decisions are likely to be critical on the one hand and the underlying realities of decision taker aims and forms of struggle on the other. However, they cannot be forgotten or hidden (to the benefit of elites, manipulators and existing orders) nor safely entrusted to communicators who, after all, inevitably have quite particular individual, institutional and class interests of their own.

Domestic Initiative and Response

Changing the international context of communication cannot be expected to solve domestic mass communication limitations. It can at most create a context in which it is easier to tackle them. It is also true to say that many of the changes needed would be worth making even in the absence of a major change in the international news collection, processing and transmission context but are likely to be more valuable in such a context.

One requirement is to use more sources - domestically and internationally. This doubtless costs money and - often more critical - personnel. Even today use of one of the Reuters-API-UPO group, AFP, Tass, Tsinhua, Prensa Latina, Tanjug and one or another of the secondary feature agencies would give a major Third World paper a far more diversified raw material input than most employ.

However, with a very sharp diversity of sources conscious selection, editing and interpretation in context becomes critical. That requires "foreign" staff both more numerous and better attuned (preferably by experience including actual travel in the geographic areas of their responsibility) than is normally the case now. The Third World paper which carefully edited a story from an agency relating to British Columbia but, alas, under the illusion that BC was a remnant colony carved out of Colombia is a cautionary example of what uninformed good will in editing can do! It is also an example of the reason making a paper's foreign coverage a montage

duty the press owes its readers. Editing and interpretation can distort, their absence is sure to confuse and to lead to unintelligibility.

Using a broader range of sources and using them intelligently and knowledgeably still may leave the "foreign" news as an enclave in the newspaper (or magazine or radio and tv programme). Interesting - yes, informative - yes, value informing and image developing - perhaps, integrated with overall domestic coverage - no. Even papers making a serious effort in this direction - e.g. el Moujahid - achieve rather spotty results. This appears to flow partly from overuse of "event" news and underuse of features, e.g. when there is domestic coverage on environmental sanitation or drought control or a Five Year Plan is the time to use features to compare and contrast foreign developments in the same field. When the East African Community is at the centre of Tanzania Daily News coverage is the time to use material on the Grupo Andino and when the science, technology, research planning unit in Tanzania's Ministry of Finance and Planning is covered is the appropriate occasion to review UNCTAD and UNCTAD based draft codes on technology transfer or the ongoing Mexican effort.

Certainly "event" news has its role, but in building up South-South consciousness it is probably less critical than parallel "feature" news. Only when the Grupo Andino and its programmes, members, goals and contradictions are in some sense understood by Tanzanian readers can event news relating to the Treaty of Cartagena's specific implementation or meetings have any serious meaning to readers. The understanding is likely to be most attainable (and most valuable) if Grupo Andino "feature" material is interwoven with East African Community and broader Eastern African (e.g. Tanzania-Mozambique) economic cooperation coverage. The inverse presumably holds for SELA and Grupo Andino coverage in relation to EAC. What is sought after all is understanding of self and other, informed judgements, higher consciousness, not a blizzard (or cloudburst) of exotic artifactual bits and pieces of events. A kaleidoscope without its frame is a meaningless jumble of broken glass; in its frame it offers a series of meaningful combinations and patterns.

Transforming International Mass Communications Channels: Notes
on Method

The two basic elements in transforming mass communications channels are changing existing ones to make them less unsatisfactory and creating new alternatives which will be more satisfactory. Realistically the first approach will need to be the dominant one for outgoing communications to the First and Second Worlds (a Third World Press Agency could not in the short or medium term gain adequate access to media units) and the second in respect of South-South communications (which are peripheral enough to the existing agencies and in need of such radical change that alterations are likely to be as hard to achieve as, and less satisfactory than, new channel creation).

In respect of existing transnational and/or foreign governmental agencies a short term checklist can be drawn up:

- a. withdrawal from intra-country agency service competing with the national agency;
- b. citizenisation of local offices and hiring of some citizens to serve in overseas offices (evidently this implies a balance with some foreign personnel in the domestic branch and some citizen personnel in foreign branches);
- c. requirements that agencies purchase domestically (and independently from themselves) produced copy equal to - say - 25% of their domestic sales;
- d. some type of quality control as well as quantity control - e.g. on types and total ratio of foreign agency copy used.

These steps do not constitute a solution but at most a start toward one. That they look very radical indeed in any developing country beyond a handful of those embarked on a transition to socialism indicates more how unsound the status quo is than how far they would remedy it.

Rather different approaches are needed in respect of certain existing non-commercial international mass communications media e.g. those of the United Nations, religious bodies with crossnational affiliations among domestic units and a few industrial government agencies with serious attempts at informing about the Third World (e.g. that of Sweden). Here the basic problems are often ones of technical inappropriateness and ignorance (lack of knowledge) not of inherent contradictions. A rather different checklist arises:

- a. a dialogue to identify areas of common concern in the two way

- transmission of knowledge for mass communication;
- b. a technical followup to identify means to carry out this task (especially in the case of the UN family which seems - except for minority cases like Ceres - to confuse communications with the minor subfield thereof which is public relations);
- c. a systematic development of exchange of materials between Third World (national or multinational) agencies and these non-commercial networks;
- d. provision of Third World personnel to serve in these networks both in their own countries and in overseas headquarters and branch offices.

Again these steps will not by any means solve the basic communication problems but can be a start. Governmental and religious body agencies may be more hopeful partners initially since the achievement of the UN's potential is greatly hampered not only by a confusion of public relations with the totality of communications but also by a diplomatic self censorship tradition aimed at avoiding communication that will annoy more than a handful of its constituent members.

The first group of alternative channels are those which in some sense exist but in a very marginal role e.g. the Tanjug linked group of national agencies, Prensa Latina. Here the checklist is moderately simple:

- a. increase the number of participatory (like minded) agencies;
- b. broaden the participation of members other than the originator/coordinator;
- c. create First and Second World news collection capability so a complete service can be provided;
- d. make greater use of these agencies services relative to transnational suppliers even if the latter are selectively retained and used for specific purposes.

However, more alternative channels are needed. The existing ones are far from constituting an articulated network of national, bilateral, subregional, regional and Third World agencies. If the Non-Aligned and/or the 77 create strong technical secretariats these should be approached by national agencies and mass communicators to play an active role in assisting with the development of an articulated network. Certainly both the 77 and Non-Aligned Conferences are on record in favour of this type of initiatives but in the absence of secretariats and of a network of concerned agencies, media units and journalists the resolutions have had relatively little impact to date.

Problems on who should be the members of agencies and what the form of relationships among agencies should be are soluble only at the specific level. Whether a special link between national agencies in Tanzania and Mozambique would be appropriate (presumably yes) does not answer the question in relation to Tanzania and much more distant Guinea de Sao let alone to Tanzania and both tiny and distant Fiji. The second pair could be subsumed within an African continental agency and the last within a Third World one.

Similarly whether the members of national or broader agencies should be individual media units, groups of units, or governmental information units again cannot be determined in general terms. Ministries of Information are satisfactory sole members if they are oriented to mass communication in general and not merely to communicating government news. Otherwise they should be joint members with media units. A Ministry of Information should be a major supplier of material to communicate so the issue is not whether it should be a member but whether there should also be other members. Within a national agency there is a case for membership by major public sector communicators/educators e.g. adult education, rural development in some countries.

On the face of it a national agency would include as members major media units (newspapers, magazines, radio, television), national film companies, Ministry of Information, other government bodies with major mass communication roles. Its ownership and management should be in the hands of its members. The problems of a mixed public-private enterprise will arise in some countries but this is a general consequence of a mixed economy not particular to a mass communication agency.

Internationally the normal agency form would presumably be a union of national - or perhaps at the Third World level a union of regional - agencies. The members would be the joint owners and managers. As at the national level, the agencies should seek to be self financing whether by selling their products or by agreed subscriptions by their members. In their first years the sub-regional, regional and Third World agencies might need lump sum subsidy payments to cover initial costs. Either the governments of member national agencies or, probably preferably, parallel governmental regional (e.g. Grupo Andino, SELA) or Third World bodies (Non-Aligned, 77) would be appropriate sources of such finance. Global institution (e.g. UNESCO) and a fortiori existing commercial

agency funding would inevitably carry penetrative impacts on the goals and programmes of the Third World agencies which would far more than offset any fiscal gain.

Toward a NIEO Agenda Item

New International Economic Order issues increasingly tend to be organised in clusters or packages grouping a number of integrated (or at least related) sub-issues. Both from a negotiating tactics and a development strategy point of view there is a good deal to be said for this. However, it does mean that the independent raising of small "side" (as perceived by major negotiating units and decision takers) issues will rarely lead anywhere unless they are relatively non-controversial and change can be agreed "on the cuff". Press agencies are hardly minor nor their thoroughgoing transformation noncontroversial but it would also be idle to see them as a major production and distribution vector (a la integrated commodity package) or as embodying a basic issue (e.g. just price or terms of trade or unequal exchange or indexation to cite a few of one abiding theme's protean titles from Aquinas to Prebisch to Samir Amin to Jamal).

Therefore on purely tactical grounds the press agency issues must be in the context of mass communications which should be in the overall context of knowledge transfer encompassing the fragmentary transfer of technology NIEO agenda cluster. If one accepts the earlier arguments in relation to the role of knowledge as informing perception of self and other and of the possible and necessary while also becoming the dominant form of power, profit and property, then this tactical necessity to link issues reflects an underlying strategic logic.

On the "trade union of the poor" or South-North negotiating front several inter-related salients can be identified on the knowledge/communications front, some of which automatically imply "co-operation against poverty" (South-South) parallels. Patents/Copyrights/Trademarks is an area in which skirmishes have been joined but the major negotiating stance of automatic licences of right at nominal fees for patents, an analogous procedure in respect of copyrights and total non-protection of trademarks has yet to be tabled. The present marginal reformist proposals are probably a waste of time especially as the patent-copyright-trademark triad is a symptom of much deeper knowledge-communication-advertising control which would be weakened (but not mortally

wounded) by frontal assault on the triad but can welcome marginal chipping away at the rough edges of notorious abuses as a time buying diversion of attention;

Effective Transfer of Hard and Soft Operating Knowledge (Technology) is also a field in which a start has been made. The proposed code under discussion in the UNCTAD ambit (a code based on Grupo Andino and Mexican practice) would be a start if it were adopted as a set of minimum rules (not desirable goals) and violations were stated to be prosecutable in "host" country courts with the required co-operation (or at least neutrality) of the "home" country of the offender. The conversion of UNIDO and much of ILO into relevant hard ("processes", "machines") and related soft ("institutions", "procedures") technology centres is overdue. (UNESCO should be transformed into a soft technology centre that has positive - not negative as in the past - impact or wound up and a new start made.) However, further initiatives are needed in national (South), "co-operation against poverty" (South-South), and selective "like minded nation" (South-North) fields. The Mexican technology transfer, the East African Community research (knowledge creation), and the Swedish binding code for external operations of Swedish TNCs are interesting indicators of how these lines might be pursued; South-South Technical Assistance i.e. the provision either directly, via regional or Third World bodies, through global institutional programmes or via industrial economy untying of technical assistance of Third World knowledge and communications personnel and experiences is a logical goal. El Moujahid is a logical source of personnel and experience for a newspaper in - say - the Comoros; Tanzania's adult education/radio personnel for helping devise a mass communication linked adult education campaign in - say - Fiji. Tanjug could provide inputs into building up a Caribbean Regional Press Service by, in, and of the Caribbean. The patterns of programming, access to media and institutional structure as well as of surmounting technical problems built up in Third World media units are logically the first choice for other Third World media units needing advice, assistance, training;

Power Sharing in Global Agencies and Creation of Articulated Third World Agencies is another general theme applying to knowledge/communications. If Third World countries are to remain parties to

copyright, patent, trademark conventions they must secure the power to ensure that their drafting and operation is genuinely global to meet global needs. The same point holds in respect of UNESCO's programmes (as opposed to its top administrative echelon). In addition Third World and/or regional and/or subregional bodies will be needed in the knowledge/communication field. For example a global Third World news agency is quite consistent with a SELA based regional, a Caribbean based subregional one and a special link between national agencies in Mexico and Jamaica. The number of common concerns and areas of interest will determine the appropriate pattern of articulation not Cartesian logic or a McKinseyite management consultancy neat boxes solution;

Acceptance of the principle that knowledge is property is a critical goal. From this demystification flows the conclusion that the creation, transfer, quality and conditions surrounding knowledge should be treated in a way analogous to other property issues;

The parallel principle that communications are business must also be established to secure acceptance of the principle that news agencies, transnational communications chains, etc. are TNCs and must be regulated as such with national rules on employment of citizens, use of local suppliers, export requirements (e.g. purchase of local agency copy for export equal to some per cent of imported copy), product quality, pricing seen as the normal course of events not as attacks on some reified ideal construct "freedom of the press";

At media unit (newspaper, local TV station or network) level the targets are domestic ownership consistent with national stated patterns of ownership commitments (i.e. not a private millionaire owned press in a country whose actual strategy is toward a non-capitalist mode of production); citizen staffing; public accountability in respect of product range (who has access to media coverage for what purposes) and quality; integration into the national socio-political structure and struggle (i.e. not an isolated press by, for and of professional intellectuals no matter how radical they may be);

At press agency and TV-Radio programme packagers and exporters level the goals are more complex. One leg is to secure less inequality vis a vis existing TNCs e.g. by requiring citizenisation of local staff and purchase and transmission of domestically produced copy. The other leg is to create national, sub-regional, regional and Third World alternative channels especially to reduce North inter-

mediation in South-South mass communications.

Some Issues of Time and Tactics

The effort to achieve a secure, major place on the NIEO agenda for Communications will take time. The initial response will be composed largely of a denial it is an appropriate topic, acceptance of the topic but insistence it will divert attention from more critical or negotiable issues and blank incomprehension. That is nothing new. The SDR link was proposed and elaborated at least from 1966 through 1971 before it came to have any claim to be squarely on the Agenda; 1976 is the first UNCTAD at which Commodity proposals have occupied a central place in a negotiable form despite the initial formulations of the issues dating at least to 1949.

The sooner there is an organized network of Third World journalists seeking to formulate and to promote communications as an "Integrated NIEO package" the sooner one can hope for it to appear on the serious working agendas of negotiators. (It is most emphatically not there now, at least not in an integrated form nor in relation to press agencies.) Even if one believes confrontation not negotiation or confrontation to secure negotiation is necessary/appropriate in this field the tactical first step is to demonstrate the need for an integrated negotiation package, the second to secure (or fail to secure) negotiations, and the third to demonstrate that unless and until confrontation is used together with (or instead of) negotiation nothing much will change.

Negotiating or confronting in the communications field, as in others, requires a strategy setting out guidelines for bargaining stances, sequences, priorities, "partner" selection and "target" selection. Certainly a bargaining stance must be beyond what is the minimum acceptable package of change at that time - the nature of bargaining is to seek a middle ground so that to offer a minimum package as an initial offer leaves one unable to negotiate because no fallback position is available. (Thus the Manila Declaration of the 77 is critical to shoring up UNCTAD's deliberately balanced, compromise proposals for an Integrated Commodity Package by putting a larger package on the table to contrast with the OECD minimalist one). On the other hand a set of long term goals far beyond any possible short term

negotiated results are also not much use for bargaining - the fallback position is so unclear a rout is likely to ensue. (Thus the Non-Aligned's Dakar Declaration on commodities is a strategic statement of objectives but not a usable bargaining position.)

Similarly sequences of targets need to balance what can be achieved rapidly to set up a dynamic of transformation, what is inherently critical, what sets up specific positive (or negative) relations to subsequent targets. For example citizenisation of foreign press agencies is attainable, could provide a citizen trained base for further steps but could also lead to co-option of the best citizen journalists into the present international communications hierarchy.

As to "partners" and "targets" a rule of thumb might be that the former should be as strong and as many as possible without lapsing into incoherence in respect of goals and the latter as isolated and weak (at least in respect of the goal actually being struggled for) as possible without descending to making merely trivial gains. Tactics by their nature are flexible - different alliances to secure different targets at different times in different places will be appropriate. The Grupo Andino, SELA, the 77, the Non-Aligned and quite ad hoc groupings (e.g. conceivably one of "Another Development" oriented Third World and Scandinavian countries) are all likely to be relevant frames on one or more occasions.

Communications as a serious NIEO agenda item will also require a committed lobby or rather a network of interlocking lobbies - nationally, subregionally, regionally, at Third World level, with those who stand in solidarity in the First and Second Worlds. Journalists must take the lead in creating these networks - after all they should have special skills in informing and influencing and communications is logically their number one priority.

However, the networks should not be limited to journalists any more than communications should be limited to mass communications or mass communications to press agencies. The specialised communication areas have scientists, technicians, managers, consultants, planners who also have needs in international communication transformation which interlock with those of the journalists. Further they usually have access to decision takers and influencers which can be linked with that of journalists. However, to date they have not been very imaginative at seeing knowledge/communi-

cations as a major, integrated NIEO field. Journalists should take the lead in helping create an informed, integrated set of perceptions and consciousness from which to launch an effective campaign.

The networks are not ends in themselves. Little will happen until the "big battalions" of international economic order negotiations occupy and settle down to wage systematic battles on the knowledge/communications front. These are only secondarily Heads of State - their commitment is critical but their ability to devote the time to negotiation on particular fronts is limited. Still less are they Foreign Ministers except in a handful of states (Algeria is an example of the exceptions, Tanzania may become one) because the Foreign Ministers serve as vedettes not organisers of campaigns much less battles. Normally the relevant lourdes equipes are in Ministries of Finance, Planning, Commerce (certainly not Information and for different reasons not Education). Their understanding of the importance of knowledge/communications issues to NIEO as it pertains to their goals is a precondition to their committing and maintaining analytical and negotiating capacity and a fortiori strategic political weight to the knowledge/communications area. Very few do so today - except on bits and pieces of the transfer of technology salient - because the issues have not been put to them in any coherent, comprehensive and compelling way. (It is perhaps worth warning that overenthusiasm e.g. claiming that breaking press agency power is THE issue in NIEO is counter-productive. What a network must seek is to have its agenda accepted as valid and among a number of critical, inter-related themes not substituted for trade, resource transfers, institutional power, South-South co-operation articulation or other equally genuinely valid issues.)

Can this approach work? A purely intellectual assessment can hardly be very optimistic as to short term results. However, transformation is vital and the first necessary condition to achieving it is belief it is possible. Perhaps what is required is Gramsci's cold pessimism of the intellect combined with committed optimism of the will or:

So Krishna, as when he admonished Arjuna
on the field of battle.
Not fare well
But fare forward, voyagers.

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