IV

Cultivating Journalists for Peace

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P eace is not the first thing that comes to mind with journalists and the sum total of their work, journalism. Given the widely criticized role of media in the contemporary world, journalism and journalists are typically viewed as serving misunderstanding and hatred rather than understanding and confidence between individuals, groups, and nations. Of course there are exceptions, but in general it is safe to say that peace on earth prevails despite – not because of – media and journalism.

This statement is substantiated by all those studies on media content which show how mainstream journalism strengthens prejudices and stereotypes, instead of insight and empathy. There is a lot of evidence to this effect, but unfortunately this evidence regarding our cultural environment is not systematically collated and summarized in the same exemplary manner as are trends about the physical and socio-economic environment in the *State of the World* reports of the Worldwatch Institute. (For initiatives of global media monitoring, see Nordenstreng 2003; Ramonet 2002.)

Individual journalists do not normally advocate or admit such biases; they typically believe that they are just engaged in

honest and objective reporting about the world. Yet journalists come to serve as instruments in a machinery that typically has a negative impact on peaceful relations between people and nations. Here we shall not address the eternal question to what extent media have influence in society – the above general position is taken for granted. However, it is understood that journalists are not totally determined by structural conditions and that they do have some room for making a difference including in matters of war and peace. This leads us to ask what are the ethical values which direct the gatekeepers – what is the mindset of the journalists and how is it formed?

Codes of ethics

Journalists, like other professions, have canonized their proper conduct in codes of ethics, which typically are adopted by national associations of journalists after thorough discussion in search of consensus. These codes can be taken as a fairly representative reading of prevailing professional values and thinking – the doctrine of professional ethics in a country. Admittedly, the codes represent only the professional ideology and do not indicate how journalism is, in actual fact, practised. The latter aspect of dirty practice in contrast to ideal thinking is covered by innumerable case studies as well as the self-regulatory institutions of press councils, which monitor to what extent professional standards are honoured by the profession. Yet the codes of ethics as standard-setting instruments for the profession are a most valuable resource for research about values behind journalistic practice.

I began to examine these professional codes of journalism ethics in the 1970s when involved in UNESCO's standard-setting projects such as the Mass Media Declaration and the MacBride Report (Nordenstreng, 1984). My special interest was focused on what the codes prescribed regarding international relations (Nordenstreng & Alanen, 1981), while I also supervised students to make comparative inventories about the

whole spectrum of topics contained in the codes (see Cooper, 1989; Laitila, 1995). An additional boost to this research activity came from my role as president of the International Organization of Journalists (IOJ), which gave me special access to both the history of the profession and contemporary codes in countries and languages which were not normally available, leading to books on the topic (Bruun, 1979; Kubka & Nordenstreng, 1986-88; Nordenstreng & Topuz, 1989).

In 1995 my academic base in Tampere became the site of a databank of all the codes of journalism ethics which we had accumulated in the European region from the Atlantic to the Urals, as translations in English (http://www.uta.fi/ethicnet/). This EthicNet databank was updated in late 2007 and it now includes 50 codes from 46 countries – from Albania to the UK (the latter with two codes). Thus EthicNet provides handy material for an overview of contemporary thinking among mainstream journalists in the region. (For a worldwide database of 'media accountability systems' including press councils and ethical codes, although not currently updated, see http://www .media-accountability.org/.)

A content analysis of this collection shows that truth figures as the most common standard in European professional ethics, present in each of the 50 contemporary codes. Almost all codes forbid discrimination on grounds of race, sex or religion. Also high on the list are demands to use fair means in gathering information and to be clear about the nature of information – to separate facts from opinions and editorial material from advertisements. Compared to the situation in 1995, when the collection included 31 codes, the standards have remained more or less the same. Accordingly, there is a well-established and solid ideal for journalistic ethics in Europe.

What is the status of peace in the European codes? It is minimal: only one code out of 50 mentions the word 'peace' as something that journalists should promote. The code of ethics adopted by the Latvian Union of Journalists in 1992 has the following paragraph in its last section 6 entitled 'Journalists and Society':

> A journalist should stand up for human values – peace, democracy, human rights, people's rights to self-determination.

Six other codes – by journalists' associations in Albania, Armenia, Montenegro, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia – include indirect reference to peace by condemning propagation of wars or conflicts between nationalities. For example, the code of ethics adopted by the Slovak Syndicate of Journalists in 1990, ends with the following paragraph under the title 'The Journalist and the Public Interest':

> The journalist must not promote aggressive wars, violence and aggressiveness as the means of international conflicts solution, political, civic, racial, national, religious and other sorts of intolerance. The journalists shows due respect to other states, nations, to their democratic traditions and institutions, to their culture and morals.

In the early 1980s also the Union of Journalists in Finland adopted the following paragraph in the introduction of its code called 'Guidelines for good journalistic practice':

> The professional ethics of a journalist involves the respecting of basic human values, like human rights, democracy, peace and international understanding.

However, this paragraph was deleted from the Finnish code in its latest revision in 2005. Consequently, Finland can no longer be listed next to Latvia as a country where the word 'peace' appears in its codes of ethics. Moreover, Finland can no longer be quoted as a country in which professional ethics incorporates broader values beyond strictly journalistic issues related to truth, fairness, etc. In other words, the Finnish concept of journalistic ethics can now be characterized as technocratic – free from elements of universal idealism.

The Finnish move should not be taken as symptomatic of a wider movement towards technocratic professionalism in

Europe. As described above, journalistic values seem to be fairly stable throughout Europe, and there is no evidence of a fundamental change – except in Russia where journalists seem to become increasingly PR instruments (Pasti, 2007). As far as the perspective of peace and war is concerned, it has always been a marginal phenomenon in mainstream journalistic ethics.

Rich legacy

Although peace and war remain low on the agenda of journalistic ethics, this particular perspective figured quite high in the global media debate around UNESCO and the so-called New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) in the 1970s and 1980s (see Gerbner, Mowlana & Nordenstreng 1993; Vincent, Nordenstreng & Traber, 1999). It is instructive to contrast the contemporary reality as reflected in the codes of ethics with documents such as the Mass Media Declaration of UNESCO (1978), the MacBride Report (1980) and the International Principles of Professional Ethics in Journalism (1983).

The Mass Media Declaration, adopted by acclamation by UNESCO's General Conference in 1978, already highlighted peace and war in its title: 'Declaration on Fundamental Principles concerning the Contribution of the Mass Media to Strengthening Peace and International Understanding, to the Promotion of Human Rights and to Countering Racialism, Apartheid and Incitement to War'. In its time, this document, together with the MacBride Report, signalled a turning point in international media policy from confrontation to consensus (Mansell & Nordenstreng, 2006: 22). Nevertheless, it is hardly remembered today even by experts in the field. UNESCO itself has done nothing to keep it alive; it has been wiped off the agenda by the political hurdles which replaced a Third World NWICO perspective with a Western emphasis on press freedom (Nordenstreng, 2007). Yet the UNESCO Declaration of 1978 is worth recalling, since it contains a lot of material

which is relevant to contemporary debates – for example Article VIII:

> Professional organizations, and people who participate in the professional training of journalists and other agents of the mass media and who assist them in performing their functions in a responsible manner should attach special importance to the principles of this Declaration when drawing up and ensuring application of their codes of ethics.

The MacBride Report (1980) also included several passages which are worth recalling and revisiting today, although this landmark document has also been largely forgotten – even actively played down by UNESCO (Nordenstreng, 2007: 20-25). Among its 82 recommendations many are still topical proposals under headings such as 'Responsibility of journalists', 'Towards improved international reporting', and 'Towards international understanding' (MacBride, 1980: 261-271). And one of the seven issues requiring further study was 'International standards and instruments' including the following (*ibid*.: 274):

> 6. Studies should be undertaken to identify, if possible, principles generally recognised by the profession of journalism and which take into account the public interest. This could also encompass further consideration, by journalists' organisations themselves, of the concept of an international code of ethics. Some fundamental elements for this code might be found in the UNESCO Declaration on the mass media, as well as in provisions common to the majority of existing national and regional codes.

The International Principles (1983) did exactly what the MacBride Report proposed here (Nordenstreng, 1989: 279). Actually this document contains a lot of food for thought for contemporary journalism, but it is likewise practically forgotten (although still easy to find online). It was issued on behalf or eight international and regional associations of journalists, which since 1978 have held consultative meetings under the

auspices of UNESCO. The coalition represented altogether 400,000 working journalists in about 100 countries, i.e. a majority of the organized profession in the world. Thus the document was already historical because of its mere existence: it was the first joint statement of principle which the international movement of journalists was able to make since it was divided by the Cold War in the late 1940s. The document was a unique attempt by the journalistic profession to define parameters for global ethics. It was not called a code because the debates around the MacBride Report and NWICO had made journalists wary of strict rules which would be applied everywhere. Yet there was a widely shared understanding of certain common ethical standards and therefore a search for universal values was not considered taboo but a vital project among journalists' organizations coming from different geopolitical regions.

Take from its ten principles the following two:

Principle VIII: Respect for Universal Values and Diversity of Cultures

A true journalist stands for the universal values of humanism, above all peace, democracy, human rights, social progress and national liberation, while respecting the distinctive character, value and dignity of each culture, as well as the right of each people freely to choose and develop its political, social, economic and cultural systems. Thus the journalist participates actively in the social transformation towards democratic betterment of society and contributes through dialogue to a climate of confidence in international relations conducive to peace and justice everywhere, to détente, disarmament and national development. It belongs to the ethics of the profession that the journalist be aware of relevant provisions contained in international conventions, declarations and resolutions.

Principle IX: Elimination of War and Other Great Evils Confronting Humanity

The ethical commitment to the universal values of humanism calls for the journalist to abstain from any justification for, or incitement to,

wars of aggression, and the arms race, especially in nuclear weapons,
and all other forms of violence, hatred or discrimination, especially
racialism and apartheid, oppression by tyrannical regimes, colonialism
and neo-colonialism, as well as other great evils which afflict humanity,
such as poverty, malnutrition and diseases. By so doing, the journalist
can help eliminate ignorance and misunderstanding among peoples,
make nationals of a country sensitive to the needs and desires of
others, ensure respect for the rights and dignity of all nations, all
peoples.

Today, 25 years later, we may ask whether these principles
are still current. One concept can be seen to be outdated:
apartheid was abolished as a state system in South Africa in
1994 and in this respect also the UNESCO Declaration is
outdated – fortunately. Also Principle X on promotion of
NWICO refers to a global discourse that is passé, although the
issues involved remain relevant (Padovani & Nordenstreng,
2005). But all other aspects, both positive values and socio-
political evils, are current in the contemporary world. For
example, the above quoted Principle IX, with the commitment
of the journalist to poverty, etc., is in perfect accord with the
UN Millennium Declaration's resolution 'to ensure the freedom
of the media to perform their essential role…' (Nordenstreng,
2007: 26-27).

The last sentence of Principle VIII above concerning
international conventions, declarations and resolutions is of
particular importance. It determines that a truly professional
journalist knows and understands the framework of
international law, and therefore this subject should belong to
the basic toolkit of a serious journalist. This is not a call for
adhering to universal values of humanism as made in the
preceding two sentences but simply a call to have a roadmap
for navigating the delicate landscape of the conflict-ridden yet
globalized world. Sounds reasonable, but looking around the
community of journalists and their educators shows that this
task has been largely neglected.

Committed journalism

The International Principles of 1983 deserve to be examined more closely as an authoritative – although by now forgotten – manifestation which prescribes journalism as a socially committed profession. The commitment originates from the people's right to acquire a truthful picture of reality, on the one hand, and from the universal values of humanism on the other. The commitment to truth is, in principle, the same as that held within the libertarian mainstream of journalism, although there are obvious differences between traditions as to how truth is understood. But the commitment to the universal values as established by the international community means a significant departure from the typical Western tradition and a move toward the notion of professionalism as it was generally understood in the socialist and developing countries of the time.

Accordingly, 'a true journalist', as defined by the Document, is not neutral with regard to the universal values of 'peace, democracy, human rights, social progress and national liberation' (Principle VIII). Neither is a journalist neutral with regard to violations of human rights such as 'justification for, or incitement to, wars of aggression, and the arms race, especially in nuclear weapons, and all other forms of violence, hatred or discrimination, especially racialism and apartheid, oppression by tyrannic regimes, colonialism and neo-colonialism' (Principle IX).

In fact, such an ethics of journalism implies two significant steps beyond what is typically held by the technocratic tradition with its passion to remain free from any socio-political obligations other than the pursuit of truth. First, there is an invitation for a journalist – as a proper citizen – to support a number of universally recognized ideals and to fight corresponding evils. This is a general social commitment, applying to all citizens in the same way. Beyond this, however, it calls for a particular professional commitment whereby the universal values in question are understood as vital constituents

of journalism, along with the commitment to truth and other conventional characteristics of professionalism (integrity, etc.). Thus it becomes the professional responsibility of all journalists to pursue, not only truth in general, but the universal values of humanism as well. In other words, the definition of professionalism takes a great leap forward from the libertarian notion of a journalist whose task is merely to transmit facts and opinions by remaining independent and neutral with regard to various socio-political interests and values.

Obviously, not all journalists had really made the two-step social commitment an integral part of their professional ethics. For many, what was involved is no doubt as much fashionable lip service as a fundamental reorientation, especially with regard to the second type of commitment, which brings universal values to the core of professionalism. Yet it is obvious that a new, socially committed professional ethics was emerging at the time. Accordingly, while the Document did not suggest that all of the 400,000 professionals represented by the organizations concerned would have fully stood for the ten principles, it was an indication of a trend among professional journalists that was taking place along with the movement toward a new information order.

Those professionals who, under the influence of a libertarian way of thinking, were suspicious or afraid of committing themselves to the socio-political values in question, were referred to readings in international law and politics to find out that the journalist is not expected to follow haphazard political values, but that there is a specific set of ethical values that have gradually evolved in the international community. Advocates of the Document such as myself emphasized that there was little ground for fear or reluctance, once a person had realized that, instead of being 'politicized' in an unspecified way, he or she is invited to a commitment only to those values that have a legitimate status in international law and politics.

Given this awareness, one was supposed to see that the concepts of peace and war, democracy and tyranny, national

liberation and colonialism, and the like are not simply political slogans subject to arbitrary interpretation according to tactical interests. Most of these concepts have a specific meaning under international law, and in cases such as war propaganda there are extensive applications to journalism. Naturally, there is room for interpretation and political disagreement around these universal values and principles, but so it is with any concepts that embrace human nature and behaviour. Scepticism regarding the validity of universal values typically is based on ignorance of the issues involved.

In this perspective, the new 'committed' professional ethics appears to be a less remarkable leap forward than was suggested above. After all, the journalist does no more than become openly committed to the values that constitute the foundation of international law and order. If this seems to be a radical step, it shows only how poorly the universal values have been recognized, often because of the dominance of parochial values which stand in opposition to those held by the international community. For example, if commitment to peace is perceived as a politically radical position, it exposes a poor knowledge of the concept of peace rather than a politically biased approach.

Thus committed journalism did not bring any particular 'politicization' into the field of media and journalism; it only provided a safeguard protecting values of peace, democracy, and so forth. It goes without saying that journalism is and will continue to be a highly political field – both overtly and covertly. In such a situation, any choice of professional ethics – old and new alike – represents a direct or indirect political position. The question is not which is political and which is apolitical; the question is what is the political orientation being advocated. In this respect, the new professional ethics of committed journalism had as 'impartial' a foundation as can be imagined: the universal values of the international community – something that could be called 'United Nations ideology'.

Committed journalism seems to have gained considerable support in the professional ethics of journalism around the

world, and it has been boosted since the 1980s by environmental issues such as global warming. Accordingly, the Finnish code in its 1983 revision made a reference to environment, next to peace etc., quoted above. However, this commitment was also removed from the 2005 revision of the Finnish code, turning it into an instrument of the conventional libertarian version of journalism. As a Finnish journalism educator I am naturally sorry, even ashamed, to admit that my own professional association has turned from a progressive line towards a technocratic notion of professional ethics. However, as noted above, the Finnish case should be taken as an exception in the broader universal development. While the Finnish turn can be seen as a temporary departure from an intellectual vanguard, it presents a challenge for me and my colleagues in journalism education to try harder in cultivating journalists.

Admittedly, the overall trend toward committed journalism is far from clear and contains many contradictory tendencies. This is a challenge for all to get involved in cultivating journalists – for ethical quality in general and peace in particular. And there is a lot of material to support addressing this challenge – not only the legacy of the past but also recent contributions from academic as well as professional camps.

Fresh material

Regarding journalism on topics of peace and war, a whole new academic specialization has emerged during the past few years, bringing along books (e.g. Nohrstedt & Ottosen, 2000) and journals (e.g. *Media, War & Conflict* http://mwc.sagepub.com). Also institutions for training programmes have been established, including 'Transcend Peace University', an online centre for peace studies founded by Johan Galtung (http://tpu .transcend.org/), a network of European, American and African centres ('Institute for War and Peace Reporting' http://www .iwpr.net/# as well as an Australian 'Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies' http://www.arts.usyd.edu.au/centres/cpacs/).

These provide a lot of case studies and general perspectives for the study of journalism and peace.

Particularly valuable material is included in the electronic journal *conflict & communication online* (http://www.cco .regener-online.de/) theme issues of 'peace journalism' (2006 Vol. 5, No. 2 and 2007 Vol. 6, Nos. 1-2). There, both the advocates of this concept, such as Jake Lynch and Annabel McGoldrick (2005), and its critics from both journalistic practice (BBC TV journalist David Lyon) and academic research (German media scholar Thomas Hanitzsch) present well informed and most thoughtful interventions in the eternal debate about what is good journalism with a view to objectivity, responsibility, etc. With the editor's synthesis 'Peace journalism: A tightrope walk between advocacy journalism and constructive conflict coverage' (Kempf, 2007), this package is a unique contribution not only to the peace journalism controversy but to journalism studies in general.

In addition to these academic developments, peace and journalism also coincide among professional journalists – not only in their routine work in covering conflict areas around the world but also as more general reflections and initiatives regarding the quality of journalism. The most significant of these professional activities is the worldwide Ethical Journalism Initiative (2008) created by the IFJ as 'a campaign and programme of activity developed by journalists and media professionals to restore values and mission to their profession… in a period of global turbulence, marked by war in the Middle East, fears over international terrorism and a resurgence of multicultural tension.' With a serious rationale about developments in the world in general and the media landscape in particular it 'raises awareness of how informed, accurate journalism and reporting in context helps create mutual understanding in the face of division, whether defined by language, culture, ethnicity or religious belief, and strengthens democracy.' The Initiative includes a programme of activities (prepared jointly with European broadcasters and publishers),

a set of core values and principles, and some concrete guidelines for media. The core values, with a focus on truth, independence and professional social responsibility, are another version of international principles such as the 1983 document.

In short, there is a rich legacy of ideas and a lot of material for cultivating journalists for peace. By the same token we must admit that this topic is neglected in professional ethics of journalism as well as in the education of journalists. The question is the classic: What is to be done?

Action lines

There are two main directions in which action can realistically be taken: professional associations and academic institutions.

National associations of journalists should sustain continuous debate among their members on the values and practices of professional ethics – both in general and regarding peace in particular. A concrete and engaging way to do this is critically to examine the national codes of ethics and periodically to revise them. If properly conducted, such activities will probably result in better codes of ethics with peace occupying more than a marginal position.

Likewise, professional associations should be actively involved in monitoring and criticizing media performance. It would be unwise to let media criticism become the privilege of only political and intellectual groups outside the media; this would only turn journalists on the defensive and strengthen an unhealthy tendency of media people to create a fortress culture around them. Professionals should be in the forefront of constructive criticism of the media.

These national activities are supported by international professional associations with projects such as the exemplary Ethical Journalism Initiative of the IFJ. And although intergovernmental organizations have no formal role in the business of free journalism, they should provide platforms for

professionals to promote journalism for peace and other universal ideals of the UN. In 2008, 60 years after the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it is high time for UNESCO to return to the ideas of the MacBride Report which it has kept effectively 'on ice' since the early 1990s.

Academic institutions, for their part, should do more both conceptual and empirical research on issues of peace as an element of ethics and professionalism. A particular challenge is to introduce elements of international law to professional ethics. This aspect is badly neglected in journalism education and there is a burning need to produce textbook material on the topic. Questions of international conflict are more and more recognized due to cases such as the Mohammed cartoons, but they have not been properly established in the curricula of journalism education as demonstrated in the UNESCO-sponsored *Model Curricula* (2007).

Studies of media performance are a natural part of academic institutions. These studies should not be carried out in isolation from media practitioners but there should be close cooperation between the two camps. Monitoring and assessment of media performance jointly by academics and practitioners is also a stimulating way to promote media criticism – again both in general and regarding issues of peace in particular.

Furthermore, academic institutions have a challenge to promote media literacy and media education in schools. This is no longer addressed to journalists as such but rather to their future readers, listeners, viewers – and partners in tomorrow's blogosphere.

Some of these action lines are only remotely related to issues of peace and war. However, peace is not a particularistic topic but an integral part of social and international relations. Accordingly, the cultivation of journalists for peace should not be seen as a separate item but as an aspect of promoting universal values and international law – global ethics or, as suggested above, 'United Nations ideology'.

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