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The journalist: A walking paradox

KAARLE NORDENSTRENG

Although millions of people work in communication in one way or another, special attention is rightly devoted to journalists. They have not only an important social function, but their potential capacity to influence and even to shape ideas and opinions . . . makes journalism both a profession and a mission. This is particularly important since public opinion is dependent more than ever on those who supply objective, truthful and unbiased news and information; the news gatherer and news disseminator are essential to the workings of any democratic system.

(*Many Voices, One World*, 1980: 233)

The MacBride Commission paid due attention to journalism as one of the central communication problems of our time. The Commission was very supportive of this kind of mass communication, with Seán MacBride himself promoting the idea of special protection for journalists. The above quote, from the beginning of chapter 5 ('Rights and responsibilities of journalists') of the MacBride Report, highlights the approach to journalism which was so typical of the 1970s – journalism basically seen as a positive factor for democracy, in need of further professionalization.

With hindsight, one could say that the Commission, in line with the dominant mood of the day, was uncritically naïve – or romantic – about journalism and journalists. It failed to see the contradictions involved in the very nature of journalism 'as a profession and a mission', beginning with the anti-democratic tendencies associated with any strong profession. Hence its recommendations concerning the journalistic profession – for enhancing its standing in society, elevating its educational level, raising its professional standards and responsibility, and ensuring its accountability towards the public –

remained largely wishful thinking, reconfirming good old ideas and making little difference in actual practice.

Today, when CNN and the information superhighway are flourishing, it is fashionable to be critical about journalism to the point of prophesying 'the end of journalism' (cf. Katz, 1992). True, there are trends away from the great and honourable tradition of print-dominated journalism, understood as a pillar of democracy, towards a multimedia information and entertainment machine, understood as a pillar of the market economy, with few traditional (full-time) journalists – indeed few traditional (all-round) mass media.

Yet this chapter does not subscribe to such a vision of future media with little or no role left for journalism. The present author happens to believe that the mass media in general, and journalism in particular, continue to be of vital importance to societies both in the North and the South – not least with regard to their democratization. But this belief is held with mixed feelings, far from the affirmative and celebratory positions of the 1970s and 1980s, since today one cannot fail to see that journalism is full of contradictions – indeed, it appears as a dilemma and a paradox waiting to be deconstructed.

Dimensions of the paradox

The paradox has many faces but there are four aspects or dimensions that emerge as the most obvious: accuracy, rapidity, seriousness and autonomy. They are summarized here without elaboration.

First, *accuracy*. Truth in the sense of factual accuracy is no doubt the most sacred belief held among journalists worldwide, with the related demand for professional ethics to correct mistakes. A recent survey of some thirty codes of journalistic ethics in the European region confirmed the centrality of truthfulness: nine codes out of ten include this provision which stands at the top of a long list of aspects covered by the codes (Laitila, 1995).

But the fact-oriented concept of truth carries with it a bias in the same way as logical positivism is limited in discovering social reality: while faithful to the surface it misses the deeper structures beneath. Moreover, the tendency to separate facts from opinions leads to journalistic strategies to 'objectify morality by transforming moral claims into empirical claims' as well as to privatize and narrativize morality, thus 'dissolving moral discourse into an empty rhetoric of blame and praise, celebration and condemnation' (Glasser and Ettema, 1994: 338).

It is indeed paradoxical that such dissolving of morality and overlooking essentiality is based on the ideal of journalism as an unbiased window, mirror, lens or whatever form of 'glassy' substance which is supposed honestly and faithfully to portray reality. The lesson taught by this first dimension of the paradoxical nature of journalism is that we have to question even the most fundamental dogma of the profession – truth seeking – because the way it has been conceived and practised in journalism serves as a deceptive filtering device preventing as much as helping the truth being discovered. Actually this is not a new dilemma but something that has been debated for quite a while, especially in relation to the objectivity of journalism. Yet, a truly philosophical treatment of the theories of truth has remained superficial as shown by the unproblematicized way in which truth in general and accuracy in particular is still conceived in journalism.

Second, *rapidity*. Speed, with truth, is among the most central constituents of journalism – after all, the very name of the profession comes from a daily, if not more instant, reporting of reality. A mild version of this paradox is reflected in the old ethical rules for checking the facts and correcting the errors; it was understood that reporting too rapidly may be detrimental to accuracy. Moreover, it was recognized half a century ago by the Hutchins Commission that journalists should place daily facts in their proper context or else the audience is unable to form an adequate picture of the world.

Lately, however, the paradox of rapidity has been dramatically increased with the development of the electronic media and real time journalism. The new media environment has an overflow of information – the kind of information which tells a lot about instant details but very little about fundamental developments. In fact, real time journalism is a contradiction in terms; live and full coverage of the events themselves can indeed be seen as the end of journalism, or on the contrary, as an invitation to truly interpretative journalism complementing the simple transmission of events.

Third, *seriousness*. Reporting accurately and rapidly has implied a choice of topics with significance of one sort or another – politics, the economy, etc. Historically, newspapers started with this serious material, which was later complemented by sports, entertainment, and so on. Much of the lighter part of the menu – cartoons and popular columns – in fact served as the digestive to the serious main course of journalism. A mild version of this paradox was understood

for a long time in the form of a contradiction between objectively significant news and subjectively interesting news, the latter serving as a vehicle to convey the former to the reader's mind. The underlying paradigm was the same as in education: the audience was supposed to learn something, to be enlightened.

This traditional concept of journalism is challenged by another development of the new media environment, taking place parallel to real time journalism and absorbing serious journalism by entertainment. It does not just consist of more human interest material to ensure that the rest of the news gets home, and it is not just more scandals and other sensational material with the purpose of selling the paper or the channel – ultimately for the advertisers – but it is a mixture of facts and fiction, information and entertainment. 'Infotainment' is taking over journalism, with serial shows participating in daily politics – real politicians playing with actors – and radio talk shows breaching other holy conventions of journalistic genres.

This paradox is not only about the moral dilemma of a serious journalist being co-opted by the entertainment industry. At issue is a more fundamental question: journalism has often failed to get its message across, whereas entertainment seems to be doing well not only at keeping audiences but also at telling serious stories. Cinema and fiction literature are well known for their performance in this respect, but there has always been a demarcation line between journalism and other cultural genres. Now this line seems to be fading away.

This development is not just to be regretted as a victory for light entertainment, immoral commercialism, etc. The clue to the paradox is that a non-serious, narrative mode may in many cases lead to better enlightenment of the audience than traditional serious journalism does. As with the first dimension of accuracy, we are here faced with a kind of tragedy whereby the best of professional standards may prevent rather than facilitate the intended outcome. Fiction and opinion, rather than fact and neutrality, seem often to produce the best portrayal of reality. In this sense the return of the storyteller in an electronic form is welcome, and the real kind of doubtful escapism should be seen in conventional, serious journalism. The challenge is enormous – not only to journalists but also to their educators.

Fourth, *autonomy*. Journalists, like the mass media in general, need a degree of independence from socio-political and economic forces in

order to reflect reality free of various power constellations. This is another basic dogma of the profession, widely held internationally as shown by a survey of first-year students of journalism in twenty-two countries, with striking similarities emerging precisely in terms of 'a desire for the independence and autonomy of journalism' (Splichal and Sparks, 1994: 179).

The dogma is turned into a paradox by the fact that autonomy will easily lead journalists into a self-centred 'fortress journalism', alienated from the people whom it is supposed to serve. As a matter of fact, the very nature of professionalism tends to isolate any professionals from the people; the professionals necessarily becoming more or less technocrats. This is a general paradox of professionalism, but it is particularly acute in journalism – something that concerns most sensitive reflections about socio-political reality.

By and large, the paradox of journalism can be viewed as a great irony, as suggested by Ettema and Glasser (1994). As the muck-rakers of the Progressive Era in the US failed to stimulate political action and thus created an irony of voter apathy at a time of aggressive journalistic enlightenment, the investigative journalism of our time, as well as all the other hyperinformation, seems to foster apathy and alienation among citizens rather than the civic virtues prescribed by theories of democracy. It is indeed a deep irony of journalism if the citizen is lost in an information society; if 'the audience will merely watch and . . . witness the finale of its own annihilation as a public' (p. 27).

Such a development is still a thought experiment rather than a universally established fact. Some observers, for example Galtung (1994), suggest quite a different future, with civil society – rather than the state and capital – dominating social development. The present author shares Galtung's optimism, which however does not do away with the paradox of journalism characterized above. On the contrary, a prospect for a future with genuine democracy will place the theory and practice of existing journalism under increasing challenge.

Media in democracy

Three key players in media–society relations are the journalist (media), the politician (government) and the citizen (people). The dynamic of this triangle is illustrated in the following figure where arrows show in which direction the influence goes – according to the ideal theory of democracy, on the one hand, and according to the real practice of democracy, on the other. In democracy theory, media are

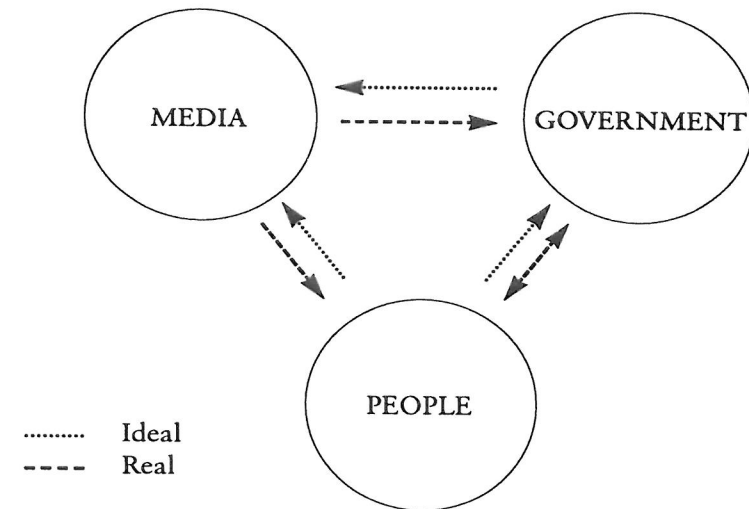


Figure 1: Media in democracy

supposed to be in the service of the people – as are politicians running the government for the people. Therefore an ideal relationship of determination is from the people to the media, both directly and via government.

In real life, however, media exercise a strong influence on both people and government, thus occupying a master's place rather than that of a servant in the power game. Ideal and real relationships are reversed, the people being a *target* of influence, instead of a *source* of influence, except for elections where people periodically choose the politicians (in the USA only about half of the electorate even does this).

Although such a textbook illustration simplifies the relationships and generalizes the variations, its main point remains valid: democracy is not living up to its ideals, and the media and journalists constitute a central part of the problem. The triangular relationships also point the way to democratization: the media should be brought closer to the people and there should be at least a reciprocal flow of influence between the two – regardless of relations to the government. Accordingly, there is need for a shift of power from the media to the people, as suggested by Hamelink (1994) in his draft for a People's Communication Charter.

Conceptually, the shift calls for a determined move away from the traditional notion of a self-centred profession – fortress journalism – towards a position whereby the owner of the right to information is the citizen instead of the media. It is time to release the concept of freedom of information from the hostage it has been taken by media proprietors and to return it where it was originally placed in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights – to ‘everyone’, i.e. the citizen. In other words, the main function of the media in the context of democracy is service to the people, rather than an abstract mission to seek for truth. Freedom in this democratic design belongs to citizens rather than to media.

Such a shift can be criticized for advocating populism, but all the same it is more in line with the theory of democracy than is the fortress journalism concept. As noted above, the performance of journalism in western democracies, beginning with the USA, has been far from perfect despite all the professionalism and its ethical intentions; perhaps ‘poor’ would be the proper description. Thus the shift is motivated not only by a theoretical argument but by a very practical argument: the media are failing to keep people informed and democratically engaged. Moreover, the print media are losing readers, especially young readers, and there is a growing concern among proprietors to look for new strategies in industrial survival.

One response to this situation is a new movement of ‘public journalism’ in the USA (Rosen, 1994). Also known as ‘civic journalism’ it calls for a community connectedness, which was part and parcel of the early forms of the press but was largely lost in the process of modernization. It is ironical indeed that today the same commercial corporate forces that for decades drove the media to be more and more commercial are open-minded and even supportive of initiatives to mobilize the public and to reinvigorate the democratic process. It happens to be in their current commercial interest to join the intellectual movement back to people and to grass-roots democracy. No doubt this is part of a more fundamental trend in the secularized and materialized West towards social and communitarian values – a trend countered by increasing selfishness and hard-line politics.

Public journalism is an innovative exercise in the theory and practice of journalism, fostered by Jay Rosen’s ‘Project on Public Life and the Press’, based at New York University. It has successfully demonstrated in several communities throughout the USA how press and also electronic media can be brought back to people’s agenda and

turned into an exciting instrument of political participation instead of perpetuating alienation and disintegration. For journalists it requires a professional approach which is quite different from the conventional role: a neutral information transmitter is supposed to turn into a moderator of grass-roots politics.

It is likely that a public or civic journalism movement will emerge in Europe and the rest of the North as well, because the social and political niche is there. As for the South, developmental journalism has already provided the conceptual and practical response to challenges there. As a matter of fact, public journalism is bringing to western journalism basically the same paradigm as has been cultivated in developing countries for decades – and opposed by many western media lobbies as something detrimental to freedom (like the rest of the New World Information and Communication Order).

If the conceptual shift from the media to the public, highlighted by the public journalism movement, is singled out as perhaps the most vital trend in contemporary journalism, the second most vital trend would be self-regulation. The latter is as old as the codes of ethics and courts of honour for journalism, which were first created by the emerging profession between the two World Wars. But self-regulation is gaining particular importance at the present time due to increasing pressures which are directed at the media – from the political élites (the state in Galtung’s triangle), from market forces (capital), and from the public at large (civil society).

Faced with these pressures, which ultimately boil down to the growing role played by the media in social and political processes in the postmodern era, professionals resort to self-regulation as a defensive strategy particularly in order to avoid governmental intervention. And many progressive intellectuals join to support self-regulation of the media against state or market regulation, as a means of protecting freedom and democracy in society – just as happened fifty years ago with the Hutchins Commission.

Self-regulation with professional ethics as its central element can be seen to be contradictory to the popular shift discussed above – after all, the idea of self-regulation is based on an autonomous profession which sets its own rules and thus is quite a long way from the idea of service-oriented public journalism. On the other hand self-regulation also means recognition of social responsibility, i.e. accountability to society and its various strata, which conceptually reconnects media to the people. After all, the very idea of accountability implies criteria

from the outside, and the question is what are the social values and norms to be voluntarily adopted by the self-regulating media. You simply cannot escape society, except by an anti-intellectual strategy of denial, and therefore a serious attempt to promote self-regulation is bound to consider not just media autonomy but also the social values being served.

In this respect self-regulation fits well within the overall theory of democracy. But it has to be taken seriously and exercised actively or else it remains the kind of alibi which has been the function of most journalistic codes and media councils so far. Today it no longer pays to deny outside intervention by referring to the mere existence of the more or less dead letters of a code or other purely formal instruments of self-regulation; the instruments in place must be real and effective. There may not be a need for other forms of self-regulation than those already known – promoted by the MacBride Report – but they must be actively developed and kept alive.

It is obvious that journalists to a large extent, and also media proprietors to a certain extent, are ready to enter a new era without sticking to established principles and practices. Precisely what will follow is hard to foresee, but the trends outlined above are likely to have a central place. A textbook example of innovations based on existing tradition is provided by Galtung and Vincent (1992) in their sets of ten proposals for peace-oriented news media, development-oriented news media and environment-oriented news media.

At this stage it is worth reviewing the historical passage so far travelled in international efforts to define and improve the profession (based on the author's chapter in Nordenstreng and Topuz, 1989).

Historical highlights

Efforts to improve the status of the journalist and to articulate his or her rights and responsibilities are not of recent origin. As a matter of fact, these efforts have as long a history as the professional and trade-union organizations in this field – the first national unions of journalists having been established in the 1880s and the first international congress of 'press people' convened in 1894. The first high season in this respect was from the mid-1920s to the mid-1930s when the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the League of Nations gave rise to the first international organization of working journalists. It was at this time that such questions as special cards for journalists and an international court of honour were elaborated.

These efforts were paralysed by the rise of Fascism and the coming war, but a new drive among journalists began during the Second World War, leading to the establishment of the present International Organization of Journalists (IOJ) in 1946. The immediate post-war period can be characterized as the second high season with a broad consensus among professionals from East and West to pursue freedom and responsibility of journalists as well as trade-unionism among them. Typical of this situation was the highest possible status granted to the IOJ in the United Nations Conference on Freedom of Information in Geneva in spring 1948.

The Cold War brought this season to a halt before it produced anything tangible beyond statements and resolutions – which as such were quite thoughtful and promising. Unfortunately the international movement of journalists was split in much the same way as was the world at large. However, from the mid-1950s onwards there were significant attempts to promote professional interests on a broad international basis, notably through so-called World Meetings of Journalists (Helsinki 1956, Baden 1960, Mediterranean 1961). After these, regional organizations of journalists took shape in Africa, the Arab world and Latin America.

These developments were significant in political and regional terms, but they did not produce much in terms of a major global improvement in the status of journalists or in the understanding of their rights and responsibilities. It is also to be noted that the Cold War paralysed much of the UN and Unesco activities in this area until the late 1960s – the first and last major initiative which Unesco undertook during this period being the attempt in 1948–9 to set up an International Institute of the Press and Information.

It was only in the early 1970s – along with East–West détente and the consolidation of the Non-Aligned Movement – that a new historical momentum was reached for true international collaboration in the interest of the profession. At this stage Unesco came to play an active role, among other things by promoting ethical principles. These efforts may not have been very innovative – much of the substance was simply a repetition of what was said during the earlier high seasons – but none the less they were significant, both politically and professionally. This is particularly so because of what appears to be a kind of ecumenical approach covering not only various geopolitical orientations but also workers and employers alike.

This can be regarded as the third high season, lasting until the late 1980s, with landmarks such as the codes of ethics by the regional organizations in Arab, Latin American and ASEAN regions as well as a joint venture by the Finnish and Austrian unions of journalists, the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) and the IOJ in the context of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe. Of particular importance at this historical stage was the MacBride Commission which played a catalytic role in focusing the attention of both Unesco and the professional journalists' organizations on issues of the status, rights and responsibilities of journalists worldwide.

One of the steps taken by Unesco at the time was to invite the international and regional organizations of working journalists to hold a consultative meeting at its headquarters. The meeting in April 1978 decided that those involved would set up a system of regular consultation and of eventual joint action particularly in the areas of professional ethics and solidarity. This led to the so-called Consultative Club which has since met in Mexico City (1980), Baghdad (1982), Prague and Paris (1983), Geneva (1985), Brussels and Sofia (1986), Cairo and Tampere (1987), Prague (1988), Mexico City (1989) and The Hague (1990).

The most far-reaching joint venture by the Consultative Club to date is a document entitled 'International Principles of Professional Ethics in Journalism' (for the text see Traber and Nordenstreng, 1992). As the present author put it in a brochure promoting the document, the Principles 'constitute the first time ever that the profession of journalism has manifested itself in a universal declaration of ethics'. The document, adopted in November 1983, was an outcome of a collective effort of the Club, which represents the overwhelming majority of organized journalists in the world. Not less significant, all continents and geopolitical regions were covered, which means that behind the document were quite different ideological and philosophical orientations extending from Communists to Christian Democrats. Yet it is obvious that the document enjoyed little or no support at the political extremes – particularly among those who sympathize with 'tyrannic regimes'. The document itself had a political orientation which might simply be called democratic. It was a manifestation of the same line of universal values as advocated by the Mass Media Declaration of Unesco in 1978.

Such a dedication to the values and principles of the international

community was a significant step for a profession with a strong tradition to remain independent and, in particular, free from government interference. After all, in practice the international community is made up of governments, although, in theory, the concept ultimately refers to the peoples of the world. Yet it should be noted that nothing in the document suggests that the professionals concerned would welcome governments to assume a greater role in mass communication. It simply means that the profession itself is dedicated to the same universal values and principles that are reflected in the UN system and in international law.

By and large, the document prescribes journalism as a socially committed profession. The commitment originates from the people's right to acquire a truthful picture of objective 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 the nature of truth. But the commitment to universal values as established by the international community means a significant departure from the typical Western tradition and a move towards the notion of professionalism as generally understood in the then socialist and developing countries.

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'. Neither is a journalist neutral with regard to violations of humanity such as 'justification for, or incitement to, wars of aggression and 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.'

Consequently, the document stands for a concept of professionalism which, while building on the established traditions of journalism, commits the journalist to certain universal values. This does not mean that, objectively speaking, the profession would be less independent than under a doctrine which has made the libertarian notion of freedom its value foundation. Journalism is always bound to be dependent on certain social interests and values, whether openly recognized or accepted as a hidden ideology. In this respect the document plays an important function as an instrument to stimulate critical appraisal of the profession itself.

On the other hand, 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 which constitute the foundation of international law and order. If this seems to be a radical step, it only goes to show how poorly universal values have been recognized, often due to the dominance of parochial values which stand in opposition to those held by the international community.

Thus, the new professional ethics in journalism did not bring any particular 'politization' into the field of information; it only provided a safeguard against policies which depart from the universally recognized values of peace, democracy, etc. It goes without saying that journalism is and will continue to be a highly political field – overtly or covertly. In such a situation, any choice of professional ethics 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 had as 'impartial' a foundation as can be imagined: the universal values of the international community.

The 1983 Principles serve as a reminder that professional doctrines in journalism were in transition – after decades of intellectual stagnation. This was true of all the three 'worlds' – East, West and South. The latest reading of the Club's position to the same effect is to be found in the Final Report of the International Symposium on the Mass Media Declaration of Unesco, submitted to the Unesco Secretariat in May 1988:

We wish to reiterate the principal view that the operation of the mass media should be determined primarily by the practice of professional journalism in the public interest without undue government or commercial influence. What we stand for is professionalism supported by the idea of a free and responsible press.

We acknowledge the fact that the role played by information and communication in national as well as international spheres has become more and more prominent during the past decade, with a growing responsibility being placed upon the mass media and journalists. This calls, increasingly, for professional autonomy of journalists as well as a measure of public accountability. (Nordenstreng, 1993: 105)

This statement, like the 1983 Principles, serves as a textbook example of the democratic shift discussed above: a professional ideology of fortress journalism is yielding to a new doctrine taking people more

seriously and admitting self-regulation as a mechanism of accountability. On the other hand, the statement (particularly its beginning where professionalism is defined to be 'primary') still carries a legacy of fortress journalism – not surprising given the source of the statement: a collective voice of journalists worldwide.

All and all, the Consultative Club and its statements such as the one quoted above suggest an optimistic reading of how professionalism has developed over the decades – indeed over a full century. Despite all the divisions in the world, a universal force of democratic journalism has emerged. Certainly, it has not penetrated all media in all countries; what is at issue is not a total trend but rather a significant trace of a trend. Moreover, even if penetrated, it does not guarantee that actual media performance is changed accordingly. Naturally doctrines and statements do not change the world, but they are necessary vehicles in mobilizing journalists for the cause of democracy.

Prospects ahead

If historical development has produced three high seasons of promoting the status and doctrines of journalism up to the 1980s, one is led to ask: 'Isn't there room for another high season just now – after the collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe, beyond the Cold War?' The answer is No, or at least not Yes.

It is indeed paradoxical that at the time when the Berlin Wall came down, the universal movement of journalists got paralysed. This was partly caused by the turmoil which entered the IOJ as most of its East European member organizations (beginning with the one at its seat, Prague) went through a total political change. But it was also caused by the fact that the IFL (with its political environment in Brussels which was unchanged after the Cold War) was no longer interested in talking to other regions at the Consultative Club but instead only on its own ground. In other words, the Cold War legacy took its toll by turning earlier, more or less equal partners into an impossible equation: IOJ on the defensive, IFJ on the offensive – with the regional federations in Africa, Asia and Latin America torn by their own internal conflicts. No doubt it is a complicated story with many factors involved, but it remains a sad fact that the Club has been totally dormant since 1990.

One contributing factor to the paralysis of a universal movement of journalists is Unesco, which effectively isolated the IOJ and took the

IFJ as the only international partner among journalist organizations. As the IOJ had been *primus inter pares* in the Consultative Club, Unesco distanced itself from this forum of co-operation. Instead Unesco promoted its own regional conferences of independent media, including media owners. In this new constellation, the IFJ was brought to the same table with newspaper and broadcasting proprietors, promoting media freedom around the world – but no longer in the name of working journalists alone as had been the case at the Club table.

Accordingly, the earlier 'ecumenical journalist' movement got no support in the new political environment, and it was replaced by a more or less vindictive 'free media' movement. However, this page of history is not yet finished. It may well be that a new and more balanced approach will follow – both in international journalist movements and Unesco – but it will hardly be so sweeping and deep as to give rise to another historical high season.

Apart from politics, the prospects ahead are made gloomy by the developments in media ownership and structures. Media concentration and transnationalization, with the ever greater role of market forces, leads to journalists and their profession being under heavier pressure. One aspect of this development is the fact that fewer and fewer creative media workers are employed full time and more and more are working freelance. This weakens trade unions and reduces their potential for promoting the status of the profession, both nationally and internationally.

But even this gloomy trend has its countertrends. Hard times also stimulate a fighting spirit; trade unions and professional associations have by no means ceased to be influential in the media field. At the international level, the IFJ not only sits with the employers in exporting freedom to the East and South, but it keeps fighting the employers and their organizations in matters of media concentration, copyright, etc. Moreover, the IFJ has become a leading force in the fight against racism and xenophobia in the media – as invited by the 1983 Principles.

Still, keeping in mind the dimensions of the paradox discussed at the beginning of this chapter, one cannot but conclude that the profession is in disarray and in a state of confusion. Although we should not become doomsday prophets and propagate the fashionable vision of 'the end of journalism', the prospects ahead are far from clear and obvious.

Uncertainty invites vigilance. No simple problems, no easy solutions. A lot of challenges.

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PHILIP LEE

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