

## Mass Media

Mass media influences the consciousness of people and structures their attitudes, values and cultural manifestations. The mass media do not operate in a social, political or economic vacuum. They are governed by the prevailing economic, political and social relations within countries as well as between different countries.

The development of the information media in many Non-Aligned countries has been insufficient and uneven. Further, still the major world news agencies attempt to mould public opinion not only in the world at large but in the Non-Aligned Countries themselves. As the resolution of a plan of action for co-operation in the field of information adopted at the Delhi conference in July puts it "the communication network, including the transnational press agencies, was created by and in the interests of the colonial powers". Consequently there is a

### QUOTES FROM THE DELHI CONFERENCE

*"The domination of mass media by certain advanced countries was yet another extension, much more subtle and pernicious, of the familiar phenomenon of political and economic domination threatening the sovereignty of the newly independent countries".*

Mr. K. Jhagat Singh,  
Minister for Economic Planning and  
Development, Mauritius.

*"My country's association with foreign established news agencies has brought us to the conclusion that these agencies' main interest was to look for sensational stories, which undermined the efforts of the developing countries. They always attributed such things as natural catastrophes brought about by drought and as a consequent famine either to negligence or lack of foresight by an underdeveloped country".*

Mr. Daniel Mutunda,  
Minister for Information and  
Broadcasting, Kenya.

*"We in the past had relied on Western news agencies, which had no interest in the people and their development. These news agencies were not concerned with the developments made in Botswana or India in agriculture. They were wanting only a strike at a mining establishment in Botswana and that is all they would report".*

Dr. D. K. Kwelagobe,  
Minister for Information and Public  
Works, Botswana.

prestructuring of the output of the transnational media so that they continue to serve the interests of the metropolitan countries.

The output of the large transnational media firms whether it be through magazines or through new channels structure, therefore, the consciousness of our peoples by what has originally been selected as "newsworthy" and is considered of interest in a metropolitan country. Now what is newsworthy and of interest depends on the socio-economic and other problems and interests of a given country. Recently our countries have been discovering more and more that there is a conflict of interest between the Third World and the rich industrialised countries as exemplified for example in our demand for a New Economic Order.

Similarly the information that the transnational media picks up as news and transmits to other countries structures our images as well as colours the way our realities are presented. Thus in matters relating to liberation from colonial rule and to justice from racialism there is a tendency to treat these issues as unfair and unreasonable demands. Thus the coverage on the reality of the Rhodesian situation until very recently was strongly coloured to give a different perspective from the true realities. Only when frustrated blacks resorted to self-defensive violence did their reality become meaningful and newsworthy to the media.

To offset these influences it has become necessary for the Third World to attempt developing its own news and media structures. At the Conference of Foreign Ministers of the Non-Aligned countries in Lima in August 1975 amongst the important documents adopted was a Resolution on co-operation in the field of disseminating information and the mass communications media. A symposium on mass communications amongst the Non-Aligned countries was also held in Tunis, at the end of March 1976 in which over fifty Non-Aligned countries took part.

In July there was a meeting of Non-Aligned Government and news

agency representatives in New Delhi. At this conference representatives of over sixty nations met and agreed to a pool of press agencies of Non-Aligned countries with the avowed object of breaking the monopoly of Western mass-media and decolonising the field. The excerpts below from the Plan of Action indicates the main thrust of the meeting.

"Noting that the communication network including the transnational press agencies, was created by and in the interests of the colonial powers".

"Considering the extremely important role to be played by the organs of information and the mass communication media in the Non-Aligned countries for safeguarding their political and economic independence against colonialism, neo-colonialism and imperialism and all other forms of oppression and for laying down the foundations for the establishment of just and equitable international relations".

"Taking note of the current situation in information matters imposed on the Non-Aligned countries as a consequence of colonial domination and the need to change that situation and establishing ways of evolving a new information perspective in keeping with the aspirations of the peoples of non-aligned countries".

"Convinced that the dangers inherent in the so-called free, but in reality one-way, flow of information from a few developed countries to developing countries will result in the continuation of cultural dependence of the latter on the former".

"The conference decides on the following action plan for co-operation among Non-Aligned countries in the field of information and mass media in tune with the aims and objectives set forth in the declaration adopted and decisions taken at this conference".

The plan of action had various concrete suggestions to strengthen the information and media co-operation between the countries of the movement. The plan related to not only the problems of news dissemination but also press and publications and audio-visual media. It

also had concrete suggestions on research and training in the field as well as co-operation in examining the possibilities of evolving a common approach concerning (a) the right to information and the right to communicate in general (b) the functioning of transnational press and other agencies and (c) the functions of satellite communications.

*"My government looked forward to the operation of a news agencies pool." In the framework of such a pool "can we launch a decisive assault against the established structures of our misinformation and our demigration".*

Mr. D. N. Mwakawago,  
Minister for Information and  
Broadcasting, Tanzania.

The conference's suggestions as to the pool contained the following broad proposals:

Press agencies pool of the Non-Aligned countries agreed upon by the Non-Aligned countries is intended to achieve the broad and free circulation among themselves of news, informative reports, features and photographs about each other, and also provide objective and authentic information relating to Non-Aligned countries to the rest of the world.

The Non-Aligned press agencies pool is not a supra-national news agency. All pool-participating news agencies have the same rights in terms of the circulation of the material each makes available to the pool.

None of the pool-participating agencies has a dominant role. Co-operation is founded in the agreements reached on the basis of full respect for democratic procedure and equality.

The Non-Aligned press agencies pool is open to participation by press agencies wishing to participate as members in full standing of the Non-Aligned movement of countries with observer status in the movement.

As its main objective the pool has the exchange of objective information with the emphasis in progressive, economic, socio-political and cultural development in the Non-Aligned countries. The Pool seems a giant step in the decolonising process of the mass media.