Media Development

Vol. XLVI 4/1999

Published four times a year by the World Association for Christian Communication
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Subscriptions
Individual subscribers world-wide £20 or US$ 30.
Libraries and institutions in North America and Europe £40 or US$ 60.
Libraries and institutions elsewhere in the world £27 or US$ 40.

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Cover design
John Bury

Printed by Battley Brothers Ltd
37 Old Town, Clapham
London SW4 0JN

ISSN 0143-5558

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In the next issue

Communication and the globalisation of poverty' will be the theme of the first issue of *Media Development* in the 21st century. It will focus on poverty as an all-pervasive factor in global politics – one which needs urgent attention.

Editorial

One of the most poignant moments at the WACC/PCC 'Public Hearing on Languages and Human Rights', held at The Hague, 1-3 May 1999, was a testimony from a young Kurdish participant. He did not know his own language and as a result he had never been able to communicate with his grandmother in their native tongue.

This seemingly innocuous statement was an extraordinary testimony to the emotional, cultural, and human costs of linguicide – the death of language. It brought into sharp focus the persecution of languages, in this case Kurdish, by the Turkish state and its courts, and the language predicament of a migrant, who has been forced to reckon with the power dynamics of a host language in an environment characterised by the general devaluation of all 'minority' languages. In that sense he was doubly oppressed – by a state that denied him his mother tongue and by an adopted state that continued the process of shaping him into an *émigré* without a real home.

The issue of language rights is pecial and unique because language is fundamental to human identity and integral to what it means to be human. Human beings are creators of culture because of language. Language helps us to name our world and in that process we become a part of the world. As Tove Skutnabb-Kangas and others have noted, there are enduring links between linguistic diversity and bio-diversity. In addition, it is language that allows us to apprehend worlds that are beyond the frame of common experience. Remove the right to language and all that is left is a mere husk, a shadow, a self without real substance.

The colonial enterprise – the Spanish in Latin America and the English settlers in Australia, for example – did exactly that. They created puppets out of those who were once a people by educating them in a language that denied their prior humanity or, worse, denied them the right to their own language. To many people, whose lands were expropriated, children forcibly taken away and environments destroyed, the death of their language was the final insult – it severed historical memories and destroyed their humanity.

Unfortunately, linguicide is not only a historical fact but it is also a contemporary reality. Hundreds of languages continue to be made redundant by fiat and decree, by destructive modernisation and monocultural globalisation, by short-sighted educational policies, by assimilative cultural politics and Darwinian designs. Unesco, along with other organisations committed to linguistic rights, has documented the steady disappearance of languages in many parts of the world. Oral traditions have been the worst hit, but 'literate' traditions too are in decline. And many others, such as sign languages that are vitally important to significant minorities like the deaf, are not recognised and treated as official languages on a par with spoken language or given adequate logistical or financial support essential for their development.

Dominant language strains at times tied to religion and nationality continue to make inroads into an already fragile language environment. Islamisation in North Africa has led to the ascendance of Arabic and to the marginalisation of indigenous language groups such as that belonging to the Amazigh (Berbers). The influence of Hindi has cut into large swathes of indigenous, tribal India, and English, by virtue of being the basis for international popular culture, science and technology continues to make its hegemonic presence felt.

Many believe that the death of language is an entirely natural phenomenon, that only those languages that are sufficiently conversant with the project of neo-liberalism are destined to survive into the next millennium. Others individualise and essentialise language to such an extent that they are in danger of losing sight of the fact that the origins of language are not as important as the fact that language is for ever inventing itself in the here and now and that this is always a corporate endeavour.

The Argentinian novelist Ernesto Sabato refuted this individualism when the millennium of the Spanish language, supposedly founded by a Spanish monk from the monastry of San Millan, was celebrated in 1978. His words capture the dynamism inherent in all languages, its corporate basis, its changeable qualities and the fact that dominant languages too are liable to become a historical footnote. 'Since Spanish is a living language, not an invented one, we must refuse the good monk the honour of having invented it. All he did was to put into writing some words of a dialect that had developed over the centuries in the clumsy and poorly articulated utterances of illiterate peasants, who had no need to read Cicero in order to raise their pigs, shout for food, scold their wives or berate their children. It is impossible to know how long it took to "corrupt Latin", as one purist has put it – but then Latin had already been corrupted by the Roman soldiers, and would continue to be so through the development of other tongues. The same point could be made about the languages of other nations once invaded by so-called "barbarians" and now celebrated for their culture.'*

If there is a valid argument against neo-liberalism, it is that we cannot place a price tag on all those aspects that are basic to the survival of humanity. The commoditisation of the environment and ways of life has led to the investiture of value on all that can be bought and sold on the market and to the divestiture of value on life's intangibles such as the need for language rights and language diversity. If there is a valid basis for the right to communicate and communication, it is surely the recognition that that right can only be fulfilled in the specificity and locality of languages and not in their absence. ■

* Sabato, E., 'Latin America: A Different Way' (pp.52-55), *The Unesco Courier*, July/Aug., 1992.

What fate awaits the world's languages?

Tove Skutnabb-Kangas

How many languages are there in the world? Most linguists say around 6-7,000. The most useful source is still The Ethnologue, edited by Barbara Grimes from the Summer Institute of Linguistics, a missionary organisation – see <http://www.sil.org/ethnologue/>. The Ethnologue lists almost 6,800 languages in 228 countries. But there might be twice as many: 12-14,000 languages. How come? There are deaf people in all societies, and where hearing people have developed spoken, oral languages, the deaf have developed sign languages, fully-fledged, complex, abstract languages. This article discusses only oral languages – we still know too little about sign languages even if the literature is growing fast.

It is impossible to 'know' the number of (oral and sign) languages precisely, because there are no research-based definitions about the difference between language and dialect. On linguistic grounds Danish, Swedish and Norwegian could be seen as one language, with several dialects: they are structurally similar, and the speakers can understand much of what the others say, or at least what they write. A political definition is the only possible one: A language is a dialect with an army and with state borders. Or: a language is the dialect of the elites.

Where are the languages of the world?

Europe is poor – we have only some 3% of the world's languages. North, Central and South America have around 1,000 oral languages, 15%; Africa around 30%; Asia a bit over 30%; and the Pacific somewhat under 20%. Two countries, Papua New Guinea with over 850 languages and Indonesia with around 670, have together a quarter of the world's languages. When we add those seven countries which have more than 200 languages each (Nigeria 410, India 380, Cameroon 270, Australia 250, Mexico 240, Zaire 210, Brazil 210), we get up to almost 3.500 languages, i.e. 9 countries have more than half of the world's oral languages.

Taking the next 13 countries, those with more than 100 languages each (the Philippines, Russia, USA, Malaysia, China, Sudan, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Chad, Vanuatu, The Central African Republic, Myanmar/Burma and Nepal), we see that 22 megadiversity countries have around 75% of the world's languages. More than 80% of the world's languages are endemic: they exist in one country only.

How many users/(native) speakers do the various languages have? The 11 largest languages in the world ('the big killer languages') account for approximately half the world's population (Chinese, English, Hindi/Urdu, Spanish, Arabic, Portuguese, Russian, Bengali, Japanese, German, French). Most of the world's languages are spoken by relatively few people: the median number of speakers is probably around 5-6,000. 95% of the world's spoken languages have fewer than 1 million native users; half of all the languages have fewer than 10,000.

A quarter of the world's spoken languages and most of the sign languages have fewer than 1,000 users. Table 1 has a list of those spoken languages which a decade ago had more than 1 million speakers (based on Gunnemark 1991: 169-171). A reader task: find those languages which have approximately as many speakers as your own, if you are a speaker of one of the BIG languages (i.e. over 1 million)! Or identify at least those 60 languages on the list which have more than 10 million native users . . .

Table 1: 208 languages with more than 1 million native users

Achinese, Afrikaans, Akan, Albanian, Amharic, Arabic, Armenian, Assamese, Aymara, Azerbaijani, Bai, Balinese, Baluchi, Bambara, Bashkir, Batak, Bemba, Bengali, Berber, Bete, Beti, Bhili, Bhojpuri, Bikol, Buginese, Bulgarian, Burmese, Buyi, Byelorussian, Catalan, Cebuano, Chinese, Chokwe, Chuvash, Congo, Czech, Danish, Dinka, Dong, Dutch, Edo-Bini, Efil-Ibibio, English, Estonian, Ewe, Finnish, Fon, French, Ful, Galician, Ganda, Garhwali, Georgian, German, Gisu, Gondi, Greek, Guaraní, Gujarati, Gurma, Hadiyya, Haitian, Hani, Hausa, Haya, Hebrew, Hehe, Hiligaynon, Hindi, Ho, Hungarian, Igbo, Ijo, Iloko, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Javanese, Kamba, Kannada, Kanuri, Karen, Kashmiri, Kazakh, Khmer, Kirghiz, Kisii, Konkani, Korean, Kumauni, Kurdish, Kurukh, Kuyu, Lao, Latvian, Li, Lingala, Lithuanian, Low German, Luba, Luhya, Luo, Macassar, Macedonian, Madurese, Magahi, Maguindanao, Maithili, Makonde, Makua, Malagasy, Malay, Malayalam, Malinke, Manipuri, Marathi, Marwari, Mbundu, Mende, Miao, Minangkabau, Mongolian, Mongo-Nkundu, Mordva, More, Mundari, Nahuatl, Nandi, Nandi-Kipsigis, Ndebele, Nepali, Nkore-Kiga, Norwegian, Nuer, Nupe, Nyamwezi, Nyanja, Occitan, Oriya, Oromo, Pampangan, Pangasinan, Panjabi, Pashto, Pedi, Persian, Polish, Portuguese, Quechua, Romani, Romanian, Ronga-Tsonga, Russian, Rwanda-Rundi, Santali, Sasak, Senufo, Serbo-Croatian, Serer, Shan, Shona, Sindhi, Sinhalese, Slovak, Slovenian, Somali, Songe, Songhai, Sotho, Spanish, Sundanese, Swahili, Swazi, Swedish, Tagalog, Tajiki, Tamil, Tatar, Teke, Telugu, Temne, Teso-Turkana, Thai, Tibetan, Tigrinya, Tiv, Tonga, Tswana, Tulu, Turkish, Turkmen, Ukrainian, Umbundu, Urdu, Uygur, Uzbek,

Vietnamese, Waray, Welamo, Wolof, Xhosa, Yao (Man), Yao (Chiyao), Yi, Yoruba, Zande, Zhuang, Zulu.

Languages are threatened – we may have only 10% of the languages left (= unthreatened) in a 100 years' time. Languages are today being murdered faster than ever before in human history. The media and the educational systems are the most important direct agents in language murder today; indirectly the culprits are the global economic and political systems.

Linguists are today working with the description of the world's linguistic diversity in the same way as biologists describe and list the world's biodiversity. There are Red books for threatened languages in the same way as for threatened animals and plants and other species.

Have a look at the list of web-addresses in Table 2. A language is threatened if it has few users and a weak political status, and, especially, if children are no longer learning it, i.e. the language is not transmitted to the next generation.

Table 2. Red books for threatened languages

Europe:
<http://www.helsinki.fi/~tasalmin/europe_index.html>
Northeast Asia:
<http://www.helsinki.fi/~tasalmin/nasia_index.html>
Asia and the Pacific:
<http://www.tooyoo.l.u-tokyo.ac.jp/redbook/asiapacific/asia-index.html>
Africa:
<http://www.tooyoo.l.u-tokyo.ac.jp/redbook/africa-index.html>
Databanks for Endangered Finno-Ugric Languages:
<http://www.helsinki.fi/~tasalmin/deful.html>http://www.suri.ee>
Russia: <http://www.eki.ee/books/redbook/>

Even the most 'optimistic realistic' linguists now estimate that half of today's oral languages may have disappeared or at least not be learned by children in a 100 years' time. The pessimistic but realistic (e.g. Michael Krauss from Alaska, 1992) estimate that we may only have some 10% of today's oral languages left as vital, non-threatened languages in the year 2100. 90% may be 'dead' or 'on death row' (a negative term that many object to). On the other hand languages can also be 'reborn' or 'reclaimed' – there is a handful of examples of this. Kaurna in Australia is one; Rob Amery's book describing this is in press (and those who speak it now say that it was not dead – even if the last speaker died in the late 1920s – it was only sleeping...). But so far this has happened seldom, and fairly few new languages arise.

Languages are more threatened than biological species

Linguistic diversity is disappearing relatively much faster than biodiversity. I will present a very simple comparison. The number of biological species on earth has been estimated at something between 5 and 30 million. According to conservative (i.e. optimistic) assessments, more than 5,000 species disappear every year. Pessimistic evaluations claim that this figure may be up to 150,000.

Using the most 'optimistic' estimate of both the number of species (30 million) and the killing of species (5,000/year), the extinction rate is 0.017% per year. With the opposite, the most 'pessimistic' estimates (5 million species; 150,000/year disappear), the yearly extinction rate is 3%.

On the other hand, researchers who use the high extinction rates, often also use higher estimates for numbers of species. If the number of species is estimated at 30 million and 150,000 disappear yearly, the rate would be 0.5 per year. Many researchers seem to use yearly extinction rates which vary between 0.2% ('pessimistic realistic') and 0.02 ('optimistic realistic' – these are my labels).

According to the 'pessimistic realistic' estimate, then, 20% of the biological species we have today might be dead in the year 2100, in a hundred years' time; according to the 'optimistic realistic' the figure would be 2%. This can be compared to the numbers of plants and animals which are on the Red Lists on threatened species (start with <http://www.wcmc.org.uk/species/data/index.html> and continue with <http://www.rbge.org.uk/data/wcmc/plants.by.taxon.html>; <http://www.wcmc.org.uk/species/plants/plant_redlist.html>; <http://www.wcmc.org.uk/species/animals/>.

My conclusion:

- Optimistic: 2% of biological species but 50% of languages may be dead (or on death row) in a 100 years' time.
- Pessimistic: 20% of biological species but 90% of languages may be dead (or on death row) in a 100 years' time.

Linguistic diversity and biodiversity

Many people are worried about the disappearance of biodiversity. Why are there so incredibly few who are worried about the disappearance of linguistic diversity? Why are there almost no people screaming about linguistic genocide? Where are the big NGOs, world congresses and summits, foundations, research millions?

Linguistic diversity and biodiversity are mutually influencing each other. Conservationist David Harmon (1995: 14) has looked at correlations between biological and linguistic diversity. In Table 3 he compares endemism of languages and higher vertebrates (mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians), with the top 25 countries for each type. I have capitalised and made bold those countries which are on both lists.

Sixteen of the 25 countries are on both lists, a coincidence of 64%. According to Harmon (1995: 6) 'it is very unlikely that this would only be accidental'. Harmon gets the same results with flowering plants and languages, butterflies and languages, etc. – a high correlation between countries with biological and linguistic megadiversity.

What is new and exciting for research is that there is mounting evidence to suggest that it might not only be a correlational relationship. It may also be causal: linguistic and cultural diversity on the one hand and biodiversity on the other hand seem mutually to reinforce and support

Table 3. Endemism in languages and higher vertebrates: a comparison of the top 25 countries

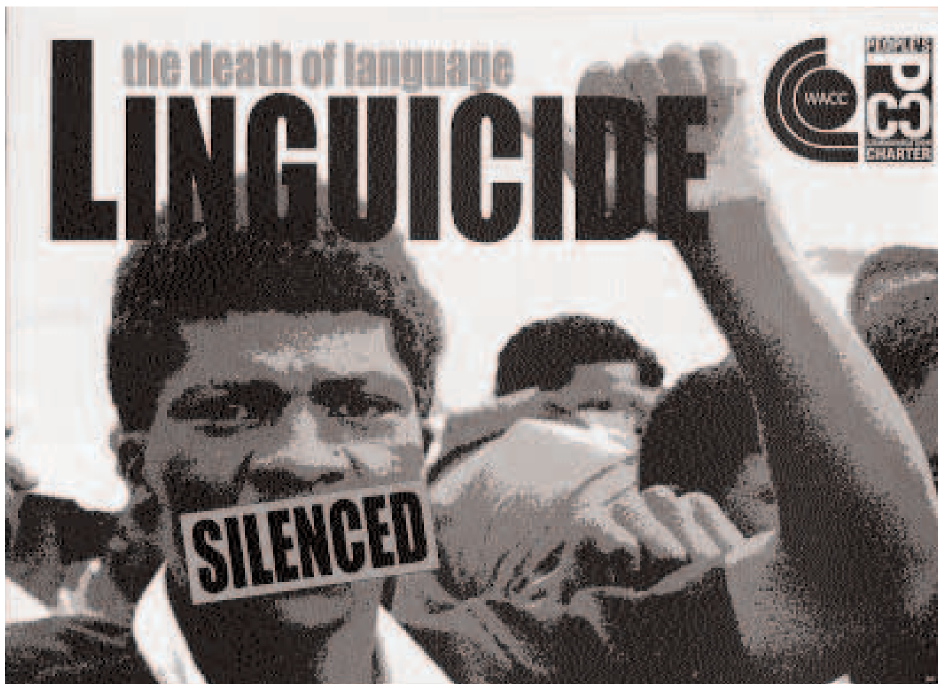
Endemic languages	Number	Endemic higher vertebrates	Number
1. PAPUA NEW GUINEA	847	1. AUSTRALIA	1346
2. INDONESIA	655	2. MEXICO	761
3. Nigeria	376	3. BRAZIL	725
4. INDIA	309	4. INDONESIA	673
5. AUSTRALIA	261	5. Madagascar	537
6. MEXICO	230	6. PHILIPPINES	437
7. CAMEROON	201	7. INDIA	373
8. BRAZIL	185	8. PERU	332
9. ZAIRE	158	9. COLOMBIA	330
10. PHILIPPINES	153	10. Ecuador	294
11. USA	143	11. USA	284
12. Vanuatu	105	12. CHINA	256
13. TANZANIA	101	13. PAPUA NEW GUINEA	203
14. Sudan	97	14. Venezuela	186
15. Malaysia	92	15. Argentina	168
16. ETHIOPIA	90	16. Cuba	152
17. CHINA	77	17. South Africa	146
18. PERU	75	18. ZAIRE	134
19. Chad	74	19. Sri Lanka	126
20. Russia	71	20. New Zealand	120
21. SOLOMON ISLANDS	69	21. TANZANIA	113
22. Nepal	68	22. Japan	112
23. COLOMBIA	55	23. CAMEROON	105
24. Côte d'Ivoire	51	24. SOLOMON ISLANDS	101
25. Canada	47	25. ETHIOPIA	88
		26. Somalia	88

each other. And if the long-lasting co-evolution which people have had with their environments for millions of years is abruptly disrupted, without nature (and people) getting enough time to adjust and adapt, we can expect a catastrophe. If, during the next 100 years, we murder 50-90% of the linguistic (and thereby mostly also the cultural) diversity which is our treasury for historically developed knowledge, including knowledge about some of the most vulnerable and most biologically diverse environments in the world, we are also seriously undermining our chances of life on earth. The planet does not need us – but we might need the planet.

Linguistic genocide

Linguistic human rights in education are one possible tool for supporting linguistic diversity. But most countries in the world violate them every day. Most countries participate in committing genocide in their educational systems, according to UN definitions, both those which are in the 1948 UN International Convention of the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Articles II(e), 'forcibly transferring children of the group to another group', and II(b), 'causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group'; emphasis added) and the specific definition of linguistic genocide which was in the final Draft of the Conventions but was voted down in the UN General Assembly (Article III(1) 'Prohibiting the use of the language of the group in daily intercourse or in schools, or the printing and circulation of publications in the language of the group').

'Prohibition' can be direct or indirect. If there are no minority teachers in the preschool/school and if the minority language is not used as the main medium of education, the use of the language is indirectly prohibited in daily intercourse/in schools, i.e. it is a question of linguistic



WACC and PCC jointly organised a hearing on language rights in May 1999 (see following article).

genocide. Assimilationist submersion education where minorities are taught through the medium of dominant languages, cause mental harm and lead to the students using the dominant language with their own children later on, i.e. over a generation or two the children are linguistically forcibly transferred to a dominant group.

Most countries do not follow the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities' Hague Recommendations Regarding the Education Rights of National Minorities & Explanatory Note (October 1996, The Hague). These guidelines were worked out by a small group of experts on human rights and education (including the author of this article). They represent an interpretation of present human rights standards; they are also valid for immigrant minorities. In the section 'The spirit of international instruments', bilingualism is seen as a right and responsibility for persons belonging to national minorities (Art. 1), and states are reminded not to interpret their obligations in a restrictive manner (Art. 3).

In the section on 'Minority education at primary and secondary levels', mother tongue medium education is recommended at all levels, including bilingual teachers in the dominant language as a second language (Articles 11-13). Teacher training is made a duty of the state (Art. 14):

- (11) The first years of education are of pivotal importance in a child's development. Educational research suggests that the medium of teaching at pre-school and kindergarten levels should ideally be the child's language. Wherever possible, States should create conditions enabling parents to avail themselves of this option.
- (12) Research also indicates that in primary school the curriculum should ideally be taught in the minority language. The minority language should be taught as a subject on a regular basis. The State language should also be taught as a subject on a regular basis preferably by bilingual teachers who have a good understanding of the children's cultural and linguistic background. Towards the end of this period, a few practical or non-theoretical subjects should be taught through the medium of the State language. Wherever possible, States should create conditions enabling parents to avail themselves of this option.
- (13) In secondary school a substantial part of the curriculum should be taught through the medium of the minority language. The minority language should be taught as a subject on a regular basis. The State language should also be taught as a subject on a regular basis preferably by bilingual teachers who have a good understanding of the children's cultural and linguistic background. Throughout this period, the number of subjects taught in the State language, should gradually be increased.
- (14) The maintenance of the primary and secondary levels of minority education depends a great deal on the availability of teachers trained in all disciplines in the mother tongue. Therefore, ensuing from the obligation to provide adequate opportunities for minority language education, States should provide adequate facilities for the appropriate training of teachers and should facilitate access to such training.

Finally, the Explanatory Note states that '[S]ubmersion-type approaches whereby the curriculum is taught exclusively through the medium of the State language and minority children are entirely integrated into classes with children of the majority are not in line with international standards' (p.5).

Most Western countries participate in murdering the chances that they might have to increase the linguistic diversity in their countries, because they do not give immigrants and refugees much chance of maintaining and developing their languages. Development co-operation also participates, with very few exceptions, in murdering

small languages and supporting subtractive spread of the big killer languages, especially English. 'Subtractive spread' means that new languages are not learned in addition to the language(s) people already have, but instead of them, at the cost of the mother tongue(s). The whole homogenisation process that globalisation is made to 'demand' has to be problematised and nuanced before it is too late.

UNEP (United Nations Environmental Program) organised, together with others, the world summit on biodiversity in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. In connection with the Rio conference a megavolume was published, summarising our knowledge on biodiversity (Heywood, V.H. (ed.) (1995), *Global Biodiversity Assessment*, Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press & UNEP). A companion volume on other types of diversity is now in press (Posey, Darrell A. (ed.), *Cultural and Spiritual Values of Biodiversity,* New York: UNEP (United Nations Environmental Programme) & Leiden: Intermediate Technologies, Leiden University). In the article on linguistic diversity, Luisa Maffi and I argue that 'the preservation of the world's linguistic diversity must be incorporated as an essential goal in any bioculturally-oriented diversity conservation program'. For more detail, see Skutnabb-Kangas, Tove (in press). *Linguistic genocide in education – or worldwide diversity and human rights?* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates; 540 pages).

A good place to continue is Terralingua's web-site <http://cougar.ucdavis.edu/nas/terralin/home.html>; e-mails: Luisa Maffi, President: <maffi@nvu.edu>; David Harmon, Secretary & Treasurer: <gws@mail.portup.com>; Tove Skutnabb-Kangas, Vice-President: <tovesk@babel.ruc.dk>. Maybe you, the reader, would like to become a member? There is much to do! 'Terralingua is a nonprofit international organisation devoted to preserving the world's linguistic diversity and to investigating links between biological and cultural diversity.'

But just to dig where you stand, with the effectiveness of the 'killer languages': why is it that it is much easier for me to write this article in English than in my mother tongues (Finnish or Swedish) or the dominant language of the country where I live (Danish)? Information and awareness does not weigh a lot compared to economic imperatives, not even for academics – even if I have written books in all those languages. ■

Tove Skutnabb-Kangas (PhD) – mother tongues Finnish and Swedish – is professor in the Department of Languages and Culture at University of Roskilde, Denmark. She has among her main research interests linguistic human rights, multilingual education, language and power, linguistic imperialism and the relationship between linguistic (and cultural) diversity and biodiversity. For publications, see < http://babel.ruc.dk/~tovesk/>.

To ban or not to ban?

It was recently reported that the ANC is to outlaw 'hurtful' words, provoking a diversity of responses within South Africa.

The South African government plans to introduce legislation banning the use of 'hurtful and abusive' words such as 'kaffir' and 'boer', and establish special courts to combat racial discrimination. Critics have denounced the African National Congress's planned law as draconian and a violation of constitutional guarantees of free speech. They say the promotion of the 'equality and prevention of unfair discrimination' Bill will curb reporting and political debate.

The Bill's defenders say 'hate speech' is still very much a part of South African life and needs to be curbed. The Bill forbids the publications of 'propaganda, ideas or theories based on unfair racial stereotypes' and the promotion of inequality or prejudice. Publication is defined as 'any speech or any form of communication which seeks to convey a message or expression of ideas, opinion or beliefs'. This would include the press, political speeches and art.

Terms of abuse

As the draft law stands, the justice minister would issue guidelines on what was banned. The law proposes curbing the use of words such as 'kaffir' (literally meaning 'infidel' but used to mean 'nigger'), 'boer' (literally 'farmer' but often implying 'racist'), 'coolie' (used to deride people of Indian origin), and 'meid' (literally 'maid' but it has come to mean 'whore' and is used as a term of abuse for a woman of mixed race).

Raymond Louw, deputy chairman of the Freedom of Expression Institute in Johannesburg, said the law would ban reporting of racially charged politics and even history books quoting speeches apartheid era leaders.

'This is draconian legislation', he said. 'It obviously contravenes the constitution. It would make it virtually impossible to record what people say in anger. You couldn't print a lot of what was in *Hansard* from years gone by. That is what freedom of expression is all about, the right to publish views offensive to others.'

But South Africa's equal opportunities commissioner, Pansy Tlakula, said there was a constitutional requirement on parliament to prohibit discrimination. 'Racism in this country is well and alive. We receive a large number of complaints from people about racism. There is no legislation that gives them protection.'

It seems that the Bill needs a lot more reflection and consultation. In the USA, the First Amendment to the Constitution prohibits laws 'abridging freedom of speech or of the press' The South African government will have to weigh freedom of expression against the abuses of history before deciding what course to take. ■

Every day somewhere in the world a child, a woman, a man stops speaking their mother tongue.[1] The world's languages are disappearing faster than ever before in human history. Some predictions are that 90% of the world's languages are in danger of dying out within a century. The linguistic diversity that has been an essential characteristic of the human species is being replaced by a system in which some languages are expanding at the cost of others. This is now true within nation states and the global system. Control over someone's language has become one of the primary means of exerting power over other aspects of people's life.

First public hearing on languages and human rights

Language is one of the essential keys to cultural and personal identity. People construct their identities in the house of their language. The present situation poses therefore a great risk to human diversity. Since linguistic and cultural diversity and bio-diversity mutually influence each other, this also contributes to a major ecological crisis.

This crisis has led social movements and organizations, human rights advocates, scientists and many others to address the world-wide problem of disappearing and oppressed languages. Among these attempts is the People's Communication Charter.

The People's Communication Charter (PCC) was drafted in 1995 as the common framework for a permanent movement on the quality of a sustainable communication environment. It resulted from an initiative of the Third World Network, Malaysia; the Cultural Environment Movement, USA; and the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC).

The Charter contains 18 Articles dealing with communication rights and responsibilities, such as the right of access of all people to communication channels independent of governmental or commercial control, the protection of journalists, the right of reply and redress, cultural identity, diversity of languages, children's rights, cyberspace, due process and accountability of media.

In order to gain the support of civil society at national and international levels, the People's Communication Charter, Amsterdam (PCC), the World Association for Christian Communication (WACC), the Institute of Social Studies (ISS), The Hague, and Olon, Nijmegen, took the initiative to organize the first public hearing on the PCC at the ISS from 1-3 May, 1999, the theme of which was 'Languages and Human Rights'.

Methodology

The hearing was organized around five exemplary cases of threats to linguistic human rights, selected by PCC, WACC, ISS and Olon. These were: Creole Language (Kwéyòl); Sign languages[2]; Kurdish language; Bilingual education in California; and the Berber language (Tamazigh).

To consider these test cases on the basis of dossiers and hearings of witnesses and experts, the organisers invited five experts in the fields of communication, language rights and international law to form an international panel of independent judges:

- Ariel Dorfman, author and Distinguished Professor of Literature and Latin American Studies, Duke University, USA;
- Barbara Losier, Community Development Consultant and Treasurer of AMARC;
- Robert Phillipson, former Dean, Humanities, Roskilde University, Denmark;
- Tove Skutnabb-Kangas, Professor of Minority Education and Linguistic Human Rights, Åbo Akademi, Vasa, Finland and Vice President of Terralingua;
- Paul de Waart, Emeritus Professor of International Law, Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam.

Dr Skutnabb-Kangas acted as chairperson. The panel focused its public hearings on Article 9 of the PCC, which reads:

> All people have the right to a diversity of languages. This includes the right to express themselves and have access to information in their own language, the right to use their languages in educational institutions funded by the State, and the right to have adequate provision created for the use of minority languages where needed.

The panel based the hearings of the witnesses particularly on:

1. the 1948 UN draft definition of linguistic and cultural genocide[3] and Article II(b) and (e) of the Convention[4];
2. the International Bill of Human Rights; particularly Article 27 of the 1966 International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights[5];
3. the 1994 General Comment of the Human Rights Committee on Article 27[6];
4. the 1992 UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities;
5. the 1992 European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages;
6. the 1995 European Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities;
7. the 1996 Hague Recommendations Regarding the Education Rights of National Minorities[7];
8. the 1998 AMARC Declaration on Communication and Human Rights.

The following experts argued the cases:

- Kennedy Samuel, Folk Research Centre in St Lucia, for Kwéyòl;
- Jan Pieter Govers and Herman Schepers from the Dutch Deaf Association, for Sign languages;
- Surtaç Bucak, The International Association for Human Rights in Kurdistan, for the Kurdish language;
- Peter Roos, lawyer, for Bilingual education in California;
- Belkacem Lounes, for the Berber language (Tamazigh).

In addition, several witnesses were heard.

In structuring the hearings, the panel employed the taxonomy of Juan Cobarrubias (1983:71) which distinguishes the following five State attitudes towards minority languages: (1) attempting to kill a language; (2) letting a language die; (3) unsupported coexistence; (4) partial support of specific language functions; (5) adoption as an official language.[8]

To judge the evidence, the following questions guided the international panel of independent judges:

1. Was Article 9 of the CPP violated in each context?
2. Where can each state be placed on the five-point taxonomy of ways of killing/unsupported co-existence or promoting a language?
3. Does this represent genocide according to the definition approved by the UN in 1948 at the time of the passing of the UN Convention on the Crime of Genocide and according to Article II (b) and (e) of the Convention?

General considered opinions

1. The panel was very satisfied with the selection of the test cases. The co-operation of the witnesses and experts was excellent. The hearings were open, frank and often moving.
2. The information gathered by the panel from the very extensive and substantial documentation as well as from the hearings provided an adequate basis for drawing conclusions and presenting recommendations to civil society and to national and international organizations.
3. The overall impression is that the five test cases are representative of serious, generalized and systematic violations of linguistic rights around the world and underline the importance of the People's Communication Charter initiative.
4. The panel is alarmed that States and international organizations are insufficiently aware of the fact that respect for linguistic rights is essential to cultural and personal identity, as a cornerstone for human rights protection and tolerance, and in conflict prevention. All too often States parties to human rights conventions are not prepared to allocate resources for the implementation of linguistic rights.
5. The panel expresses its deep concern about the constant misinformation regarding the significance of linguistic rights and their violation as well as the way in which the mainstream media consistently ignore these matters.
6. While there is substantial variation between the overtly linguicidal policies of countries like Algeria and Turkey, and the covert measures in the USA and Western Europe, the evidence submitted to the panel indicates in all five contexts that there is a serious threat to the cultures and languages of a wide range of peoples.
7. There is an urgent need for international bodies and national governments to be more energetic in ensuring observance of clauses in international covenants and the PCC relating to language rights, to elaborate strategies for monitoring violations and for preventive diplomacy.
8. As conflicts between groups can be articulated in terms of linguistic difference (Hungarian speakers in Romania, Albanians in Macedonia), there is an urgent need for examples of good practice in the management of linguistic diversity (Switzerland, Finland, the Danish-German border), to be analyzed, for politicians and journalists to be better informed about language policy, and for myths and ignorance in this field to be attacked vigorously.
9. In the light of such knowledge about communication rights and language rights, and their contribution to peaceful, democratic societies, there is an urgent need for dialogue between state authorities and minority language groups such as the Deaf, Kurdish and Berber speakers, Chicanos/Chicanas, and Creole speakers.

Creole language

Creole languages have a history of stigmatization, marginalization and official neglect, but there is increasing recognition of their major cultural significance in the communities where these languages have evolved, the central role that Creole languages play in the local economy, the links that unite Creole speakers in different parts of the world (Caribbean islands with Mauritius and the Seychelles), and the role that Creole should play in education, political and cultural life.

The Creole language of St. Lucia, Kwéyòl, is the product of the merging of African and European, primarily French, languages. English is the official language of the island, and the exclusive language of the Parliament, the courts, public administration, and formal business and trade. Attitudes to Creole have traditionally been hostile, even in the home, where there is a tendency to see the use of Creole as correlating negatively with acquisition of the prestige language, English. Creole thus leads a marginal existence, although it is the mother tongue of most inhabitants and an expression of a vibrant popular culture.

In scientific circles there is now a realisation that Creole languages are not deficient forms of language, but fully-fledged linguistic systems. Kwéyòl now has an appropriate orthography, and there is a conviction in educational circles that what is needed is bilingual education in Kwéyòl and English. Changed attitudes to Creole are also beginning to permeate political circles, where there is appreciation of the role of Creole in national development. Hitherto the linguistic human rights of Creole speakers have not been respected at all, and official policy has neglected Creole.

The panel is convinced that an increased use of Creole in all spheres of life would be in the best interest of Creole speakers and humanity as a whole. It therefore endorses the recommendation that the government should be congratulated on its openness to greater official recognition of Creole in public life and education. It is therefore desirable

Attending the public hearing on abuse of language rights 1-3 May 1999 were (left to right) Carlos A. Valle, General Secretary of WACC; Ariel Dorfman, Walter Hines Page Research Professor of Literature and Latin American Studies at Duke University, USA; and Cees J. Hamelink, Professor of International Communication at the University of Amsterdam. Photo: David Shanks.

that a language policy should be elaborated that would allocate resources to the development and elaboration of Creole, its increased use in technology and modern media, teacher education, and collaboration with Creole-using communities in other countries.

Sign languages

The number of Sign languages in the world is not known, but there may be as many Sign languages as there are spoken languages, i.e. 6-7.000. Sign languages are fully-fledged, complex languages which can be used for all purposes, provided enough resources are available for their development.

In many parts of the world, a pathological view of the Deaf still prevails. This incorrectly sees deafness as a medical condition, an auditory deficiency, a handicap to be remedied, so that the deaf person can become as much like a hearing person as possible. Means used for this include the teaching of speech and lip-reading, use of hearing aids and cochlear implants, etc.

A socio-cultural view which the witnesses, national and regional Deaf organizations and the World Federation of the Deaf advocate, sees the Deaf as a socio-cultural and linguistic minority ('different' but not deficient) which shares characteristics with other minorities and where the problems which the Deaf face can be seen as human rights problems. In terms of Article 9 of the PCC, they can be analyzed as problems about:

- the right to have Sign languages recognized as official languages in all countries in the world, which should include cultural activities in Sign languages;
- the right to have Sign languages recognized as the only possible mother tongues of the Deaf (also because they cannot have full access to any spoken languages);
- the right to use Sign languages as the main media of instruction in educational institutions, funded by the state, as well as to learn the dominant official (oral) languages in the countries where they live, fully in terms of reading and writing, and to the extent that it is physiologically possible and the Deaf people so wish in the oral modes of understanding and speaking. Use of Sign languages in the care of deaf children should start as early as possible, in order for the children to have early access to the only language they can fully express themselves in;
- the right to express themselves and have access to information in the Sign languages, including adequate provision for the learning and use of Sign languages, also for hearing people and most importantly for the relatives and friends of the Deaf. This also includes the right to adequate services with signing staff in many official situations, including health care.

Two aspects of information specifically stressed by the witnesses were lack of adequate information to parents of deaf children (some 90% of deaf children have hearing parents) about the long-term consequences of various choices the parents have to make (medium of education; cochlear implants, etc) and adequate information to the general public about the Deaf and Sign languages (including information to the medical community). Likewise, the witnesses emphasized the need of access to media by the Deaf, including obligatory sub-titling for as many programmes as possible and extended use of video.

There is clear evidence of violations of basic linguistic human rights of the Deaf all over the world. In a few countries, including the Netherlands, substantial progress towards addressing the language rights of the Deaf has been made in recent years. The judges urge governments to consider granting full rights to Sign languages as official languages and to offer real bilingual education and public services to the Deaf.

Bilingual education

On 4 June 1998, the voters of California approved Proposition 227, which mandates schools in the State to terminate bilingual education of students who were earlier qualified for bilingual education under the ethically dubious category of 'Limited English Proficient' (LEP), and

immediately adopt what is known as the quick-exit submersion method of teaching English to children who are not proficient in that language. This is basically a strategy that states that after one-year of heavy and exclusive exposure to English in the classroom at an early age, students will be prepared to go on to a productive and equal academic life in English only.

The panel has heard compelling evidence that the implementation of this Proposition will lead, according to Article II (b) and (e) of the Genocide Convention, to irreparable harm to hundreds of thousands of children in the State of California, violating their linguistic rights under the Constitution of the United States and many International Conventions to which the United States is signatory. Proposition 227 also largely prohibits the use of all other languages except English in education.

Scientific research overwhelmingly proves that the method proposed by Proposition 227 will not help youngsters learn English and will furthermore diminish their capacity for other curricular education. An unstated consequence of this Proposition is to turn the children into monolingual English speakers, thus depriving them of being able to practise their mother tongues.

The panel is particularly worried about how defenders of Proposition 227 have incorrectly used and blatantly misrepresented European and Canadian experiences of bilingual education, stating that these experiences prove the benefits of educating minority children in the dominant language only, or educating children in one language only whereas all serious studies prove exactly the contrary: bilingual education grants the best results.

Most alarming, perhaps, are the long-term trends that underlie the implementation of Proposition 227. By stigmatizing the child's primary language as useless for academic achievement and knowledge, what is being implied is that the United States should be an entirely monolingual nation. The movement to establish English as the sole official language of the USA fails to see other languages as valued and valuable resources to the whole nation and its communities and their maintenance and use as a linguistic human right.

The panel finds, therefore, that Proposition 227 violates Article 9 of the PCC by not providing support and resources for immigrant and minority children to preserve their language and identity.

The panel urges the Congress of the United States to enact legislation on linguistic rights for the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, especially Articles 28, 29 and 30, and to implement the Hague Recommendations Regarding the Educational Rights of National Minorities of the OSCE.

Amazigh (Berber) language

There are speakers of Berber languages, referred to as Amazigh by themselves, over much of North Africa, from Morocco (where Berber speakers represent 60% of the population) and Algeria (25-30% of the population) to Egypt in the east, and across the Sahara (Tuaregs) to Niger and Mali. The Amazigh people are original autochthonous inhabitants of the area. Their languages (seen by the witnesses as being essentially a single Berber language) have been used in the region for at least 2500 years, with a script that pre-dates Phoenician, Roman, Arab and European invasions. The testimony provided by the witnesses (resident in North Africa and Europe) documents convincingly that in all the relevant states speakers of Berber languages are subjected to strong assimilation pressures, primarily Arabo-Islamization. In the Canary Isles Berber is no longer in use. In Africa Berber is not used in public services, the media, or the administration of justice.

The Berber languages are not recognized in the constitutions of Morocco or Algeria. In contrast to what is indicated in some UN reports, government pronouncements in Morocco and Algeria, and some scholarly analysis, Berber is apparently not taught at any level of mainstream education subsidized by the State. After a boycott of formal education in Algeria lasting one year, some experimental use of Berber has been allowed, but in such a way that it is marginalized in mainstream education. This neglect of the mother tongue of Berber speakers continues in the education of migrants in Western Europe (notably Moroccans in the Netherlands and Algerians in France), who are treated as though Arabic is their mother tongue.

Berber speakers in France, of whom 1 million are French citizens, have petitioned the French Government to have Berber recognized as a language entitled to recognition under the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.

Witnesses felt that recognition of the rights of speakers of Berber language(s) was not an issue that needed to be seen in ethnic terms, since they regard the entire population of North Africa as Berber, some of whom have been arabized.

There is clear evidence of violation of linguistic human rights, Art. 9 of the PCC. Government policy in North Africa aims at the extinction of Berber. Government policy in western Europe does not provide speakers of Berber with any support. There is therefore a clear need for awareness raising in the political, scholarly, educational and media worlds, and for substantial policy measures to be introduced in Western Europe to remedy these violations. In Morocco, Algeria and other states in which Berber is part of the national heritage, Berber needs to be accorded constitutional rights and the language needs to be institutionalized so that linguistic human rights are respected.

Kurdish language

The evidence submitted on the oppression of the Kurdish language focussed primarily on the experience of Kurds in Turkey and Kurds in exile, but there are strong similarities between the violation of the linguistic human rights of speakers of Kurdish who are citizens of Iraq, Iran, Syria and Turkey. In all cases the use of Kurdish is seen by the governments as a threat to the State. The Turkish authorities thus see the use of Kurdish not as a matter of human rights but as a security question. These policies indicate that the speakers of Kurdish, that has been used in the Middle East for thousands of years and is spoken as a mother tongue

by between 25 and 30 million people, have few if any rights. In the past Kurdish was permitted for a wide range of purposes in Iraq (where it is a second official language), just as it was widely used in the former Soviet Armenia, but at present the language is the object of serious oppression in all countries except Armenia.

The testimony, both what was presented orally and submitted in writing, taken from human rights scholarly journals and articles, documents unambiguously that constitutional legislation in Turkey explicitly deprives Kurds of their basic linguistic human rights and constitutes a gross violation of every aspect of Article 9 of the PCC. Criminalization of the use of Kurdish is a present reality, even though some laws passed in the 1990s attempt to create the impression that Kurdish can be used in domains other than the home.

In fact Turkish policy in education, in the public sphere, political life and the media, is genocidal and linguicidal according to all the international and regional documents

Sertaç Bucak (above) gave evidence on behalf of the Kurds. He is Head of the Department of International Affairs of the Internationaler Verein für Menschenrechte der Kurden, Bonn, Germany.

the panel refers to above. Only those who deny their Kurdish cultural and linguistic identity can function as full members of Turkish society. Severe prison terms are imposed on those who campaign for Kurdish (including a peaceful solution to 'the Kurdish question'), refer to Kurdish in public or the media, demand teaching in the Kurdish language or education through the medium of Kurdish, and a number of other activities which are expressions of cultural identity.

The oppression continues in western Europe and other parts of the world where Kurds live as immigrant minorities or refugees; the evidence suggests that in many countries Kurdish parents are prevented from giving Kurdish names to their children, and Kurdish children cannot get Kurdish mother tongue teaching. They can only receive teaching in languages other than Kurdish (i.e. if they receive any 'mother tongue' reaching in the first place, this is given in the official languages of the countries where the parents come from). Recently, the only Kurdish television channel, Med-TV, broadcast from Britain, had its licence withdrawn. Western governments operate with double standards when Turkey, a full member of NATO and the Council of Europe, manifestly commits many human rights abuses, including serious and brutal violations of linguistic human rights. ■

Notes

1 A mother tongue can be defined on the basis of several criteria: Origin (the language – or languages- one learned first). Identification: (a) Internal identification (the language/s one identifies with or identifies as a native speaker of); (b) External identification (the language/s one is identified with or is identified as a native speaker of, by others); (3) Competence (the language/s one knows best; (4) Function (the language/s one uses most).

The definition that respects the linguistic human rights of indigenous peoples and linguistic minorities (and minoritised majorities) best, regardless of whether they use spoken languages or sign languages is the definition by internal identification. The panel uses this definition of the mother tongue/s: the language/s one identifies with.

2 Sign languages are those natural languages that developed in Deaf communities approximately in the same way as spoken languages developed in hearing communities. Examples are AUSLAN (Australian Sign Language), ASL (American Sign Language), or Swedish Sign Language. Sign languages are complex, abstract linguistic systems, with their own grammars.

3 The Ad Hoc Committee that prepared the 1948 International Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, which entered into force in 1951, included linguistic and cultural genocide in Article III of the final draft of the Convention. The UN General Assembly, however, rejected this provision. Nevertheless, most UN members were prepared to accept the definition in the draft: 'Any deliberate act committed with intent to destroy the language, religion or culture of a national, racist or religious group on grounds of national, religious or racial origin or religious belief, such as (1) Prohibiting the use of the language of the group in daily intercourse or in schools, or the printing and circulation of publications in the language of the group; (2) Destroying or preventing the use of libraries, museums, schools, historical monuments, places of worships or other cultural institutions and objects of the group.'

4 Article II (b) defines as one type of genocide: 'causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group'. Article II (e) adds: 'forcibly transferring children of the group to another group'.

5 Article 27 reads: 'In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practise their own religion, and to use their own language.'

6 The General Comment reinterpreted Article 27 in a substantially broader and more positive way than arlier. The Committee sees the Article as 'stating that the existence of a minority does not depend on a decision by the State but requires to be established by objective criteria; protecting all individuals on the State's territory or under its jurisdiction (i.e. also immigrants and refugees), irrespective of whether they belong to the minorities specified in the Article or not; recognizing the existence of a "right" and 'imposing positive obligations on States'.

7 In order to prevent ethnic conflict, the OSCE High Commissioner, Max van der Stoel, published authoritative guidelines in October 1996 for minority education for the 55 member states (which include the United States). The High Commissioner (1997: 153) stated when launching *The Hague Recommendations Regarding the Education Rights of National Minorities* that '. . .in the course of my work, it had become more and more obvious to me that education is an extremely important element for the preservation and the deepening of the identity of persons belonging to a national minority. It is of course also clear that education in the language of the minority is of vital importance for such a minority.'

The guidelines are an interpretation and concretisation of international human rights standards about minority education. Even if the term used is 'national minority', the guidelines also apply to immigrated minorities, and one does not need to be a citizen in order to be protected by the guidelines – this follows from the UN Human Rights Committee's General Comment on Article 27 (Note 6).

In the section 'The spirit of international instruments', bilingualism is seen as a right and responsibility for persons belonging to national minorities (Art. 1), and states are reminded not to interpret their obligations in a restrictive manner (Art. 3). In the section on 'Minority education at primary and secondary levels', mother tongue medium education is recommended at all levels, including bilingual teachers in the dominant language as a second language (Articles 11-13). Teacher training is made a duty of the state (Art. 14).

(11) The first years of education are of pivotal importance in a child's development. Educational research suggests that the medium of teaching at *pre-school* and *kindergarten* levels should ideally be the child's language. Wherever possible, States should create conditions enabling parents to avail themselves of this option.

(12) Research also indicates that in *primary school* the curriculum should ideally be taught in the minority language. The minority language should be taught as a subject on a regular basis. The State language should also be taught as a subject on a regular basis preferably by bilingual teachers who have a good understanding of the children's cultural and linguistic background. Towards the end of this period, a few practical or non-theoretical subjects should be taught through the medium of the State language. Wherever possible, States should create conditions enabling parents to avail themselves of this option.

(13) In *secondary school* a substantial part of the curriculum should be taught through the medium of the minority language. The minority language should be taught as a subject on a regular basis. The State language should also be taught as a subject on a regular basis preferably by bilingual teachers who have a good understanding of the children's cultural and linguistic background. Throughout this period, the number of subjects taught in the State language, should gradually be increased. Research findings suggest that the more gradual the increase, the better for the child.

(14) The maintenance of the primary and secondary levels of minority education depends a great deal on the availability of teachers trained in all disciplines in the mother tongue. Therefore, ensuing from the obligation to provide adequate opportunities for minority language education, States should provide adequate facilities for the appropriate training of teachers and should facilitate access to such training.

Finally, the Explanatory Note states that '[S]ubmersion-type approaches whereby the curriculum is taught exclusively through the medium of the State language and minority children are entirely integrated into classes with children of the majority are not in line with international standards' (p.5).

8 Cobarrubias, Juan (1983). 'Ethical issues in status planning'. In Cobarrubias, Juan & Fishman, Joshua A. (eds). *Progress in language planning: International perspectives.* Berlin: Mouton, 41-85.

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Language and the right to communicate

Cees J. Hamelink

Despite promising beginnings, there is still a long way to go in the realisation of the right to communicate. The following article argues that 'Global civic organizations that represent public interest issues need to mobilize themselves and form alliances with other interested parties for active intervention in the fora of world communication governance.' This is the fundamental challenge on the communications agenda of the 21st century.

The outer space observer visiting the Earth for a day might easily return with the distinct impression that whatever may be wrong with the human species, it seems to be involved in free, open, global communication in unprecedented speed, volume and with total neglect of times, places, and borders.

A somewhat deeper assessment would however have shown that around the world old and new forms of State and commercial censorship are rampant. They not only threaten the independence of conventional mass media but also the right to communicate through such new channels as the Internet. There is a growing shortage of public spaces where information, opinions and ideas can be freely exchanged and debated. State censorship and providers' self-censoring of social debate, copyright rules, laws on business defamation, are all hindering political debate and public exchange on socially important matters.

Although many different languages continue to be spoken and most people in the world can only communicate with their fellow-human beings in their mother tongues, 'English is used in almost 80% of Websites and in the common user interfaces – the graphics and instructions. Yet less than 1 in 10 people worldwide speaks the language' (UNDP, 1999: 62).

An essential task for those who are concerned about the questionable state of the human right to communicate is to identify and organize forms of implementation that are effective and sustainable. A very encouraging and inspiring concrete example of implementing the right to communicate is the First International Public Hearing on Violations of the People's Communication Charter that took place early May 1999 at the Hague in The Netherlands.

The theme of the Hearing 'Languages and Human Rights' focused on Article 9 of the PCC which claims the people's right to a diversity of languages. The Hearing was organised in response to the prediction made by language experts that 90% of the world's languages are in danger of dying out within a century. Control over someone's language has become one of the primary means of exerting power over other aspects of people's life. At the end of the 20th century the world's languages are disappearing faster than ever before in human history. During the Hearing a panel of five independent judges heard witnesses that made cases in support of Creole language, Kurdish language, Sign languages, Bilingual education in California, and Berber language.

Among their recommendations and opinions the judges stated that 'There is an urgent need for international bodies and national governments to be more energetic in guaranteeing that clauses in international covenants and in the PCC relating to language rights, to elaborate strategies for monitoring violations and for preventive diplomacy.' The recommendations of the Public Hearing will be put to intergovernmental bodies such as Unesco and to the national governments involved in the five cases examined by the judges.

The organizers of this first Hearing (the PCC Amsterdam chapter, the World Association for Christian Communication, the Institute of Social Studies and the Organisation of Local Broadcasters in The Netherlands) have agreed to explore the feasibility of holding hearings annually on different articles of the Charter. Eventually these Hearings could develop into a permanent institution for the enforcement of the PCC. This could take the form of an Ombudsoffice for communication and cultural rights. This idea largely follows a recommendation made by the Unesco World Commission on Culture and Development chaired by Javier Pérez de Cuellar in its 1995 report *Our Creative Diversity*.

The Commission recommended the drawing up of an International Code of Conduct on Culture and – under the auspices of the UN International Law Commission – the setting up of an 'International Office of the Ombudsperson for Cultural Rights' (World Commission, 1995: 282). As the Commission writes, 'Such an independent, free-standing entity could hear pleas from aggrieved or oppressed individuals or groups, act on their behalf and mediate with governments for the peaceful settlement of disputes. It could fully investigate and document cases, encourage a dialogue between parties and suggest a process of arbitration and negotiated settlement leading to the effective redress of wrongs, including, wherever appropriate, recommendations for legal or legislative remedies as well as compensatory damages' (Ibid. 283).

The PCC initiative supports this albeit with some hesitation so far as the governmental standing of the new institution is concerned. Full independence from State interests would have to be secured as well as adequate financing. Both are difficult to achieve.

Obviously, an Office that operates from a non-governmental background would have no possibilities for effective remedies in the sense of compensation or other sanctions. But the question is whether this is the most

important feature. Amnesty International cannot hand out prison sentences to those who violate human rights. However, its politics of shame and exposure is certainly effective and provides a good deal of protection for victims of human rights violations. Ideally one would like to see the establishment of an institution that is fully independent, receives funding from both governments and industries, and that develops a strong moral authority on the basis of its expertise, its track record and the quality of the people and the organisations that form its constituency. Building this new global institution constitutes one of the most exciting challenges for the 21st century!

The immediate agenda

'The network society is creating parallel communication systems: one for those with income, education and – literally – connections, giving plentiful information at low cost and high speed; the other for those without connections, blocked by high barriers of time, cost and uncertainty and dependent on outdated information (UNDP, 1999: 63)'. Against the back-drop of this polarization in world communication, the realisation of the right to communicate demands that we urgently address the following five questions:

'Who pays?', 'Who speaks?', 'Who listens?', 'Who polices?', and 'Who cares?'.

'Who pays?' It is not so difficult to think of myriad creative programmes to implement human rights in poor countries, but then the question is how will the necessary resources for these programmes be mobilised: by the international community, by the rich nations?

There is a clear and urgent need for infrastructural provisions to facilitate distribution and exchange. Data on the skewed availability of these resources are by now widely disseminated, among others through recent ITU and UNDP reports. It is also sufficiently known that considerable funding is needed to arrange a more equitable worldwide communication infrastructure.

Massive investments are required for the renovation, upgrading and expansion of networks in developing countries, for programmes to transfer knowledge, for training of ICT skills – in particular for women. In 1985 the Maitland Commission estimated that an annual investment of some US $ 12 billion would be needed to achieve its aspiration that early in the 21st century all people in the world should have easy access to a telephone. In 1996, Gautam S. Kaji, managing director of the World Bank, said in a talk to the WTO Ministerial Conference (December 8, 1996), 'We estimate that telecommunications infrastructure investments in developing countries, which averaged roughly US $ 30 billion over the 1990-1994 period, will need to double over the next five years, in order to implement the necessary upgrades. The magnitude of these investments is clearly beyond what can be financed from tax revenues and internal public sector funding sources. The private sector will need to come in' (I-Ways, 1996: 32-34).

It can be debated whether the expectation that private funding will create world-wide equity in access to and use of ICT resources is fully justified. It would seem that in any case the international governmental community and national governments of affluent countries should be reminded that solutions are not hindered by a paucity of financial resource but rather by political will. Creating world-wide adequate access to ICT resources should be no problem in a world economy of some US $ 22 trillion income. The core issue is that the expenditures for development assistance represent only US $ 55 billion and thus a mere 0.25% of this income. As the UNDP reports in 1998, 'Official development aid is now at its lowest since statistics started' (UNDP, 1998: 37).

If one makes an educated guess as to the funds needed to provide universal access to basic ICT equipment and services, the calculation would have to include basic infrastructural investment costs and recurrent service charges. Adding one billion telephone lines, subsidizing over 600 million households that cannot afford basic telephone charges, providing PCs and access to the Internet for schools, the annual costs for all developing countries – over a period of ten years – could amount to US $80 to 100 billion. This should not be an insurmountable level of funding. It represents some 11% of the world's annual spending on military projects, some 22% of total annual spending on narcotic drugs, and compares to the annual spending on alcoholic drinks in Europe alone (UNDP, 1998).

For a variety of political and economic reasons many donor governments are presently cutting down on their financing of ICT-development. Between 1990 and 1995 multilateral lending for telecommunications decreased from US $1,253 million to US $967 million. Bilateral aid for telecommunications decreased from US $1,259 million in 1990 to US $800 million in 1995 (ITU, 1997).

'Who speaks?' Even with improved levels of availability, accessibility and affordability, there would not necessarily be egalitarian participation in public dialogues. People have very different information needs and different information interests.

Capacities to retrieve, process, organize and apply information and knowledge are highly unequally distributed across societies and social groups. The French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1985) has proposed that the position of social actors is not only determined by economic capital, but also by their cultural, social and symbolic capital. Cultural capital is made up of such features and skills as knowledge about wines, fine arts, music and literature, good manners, and mastery of foreign languages. Social capital is based upon the social networks that people develop. Symbolic capital represents social prestige and reputation.

To these forms of capital, the category of 'information capital' should be added. This concept embraces the financial capacity to pay for network usage and information services, the technical ability to handle network infrastructures, the intellectual capacity to filter and evaluate information, but also the motivation actively to search for information and the ability to apply information to social situations.

Just like other forms of capital, information capital is unequally distributed across societies. Its more egalitarian

distribution would require an extensive programme of education, training and conscientization. To have more 'surfers' on the Web does not equate with equal possession of information capital.

The 'cyberdemocracy' debate

'Who listens?' With more channels and capacities for people to talk, the intriguing question arises as to who would listen to all the global talking. This is particularly relevant in the context of the debates on 'cyberdemocracy'. A fundamental feature of the egalitarian society is the democratic modality of decision making. At the end of the 20th century most societies pretend to be democratic. At any rate most states call themselves democratic. They do this 'because rulers of modern states discover that effective government demands the active acquiescence of subject populations in ways that were neither possible nor necessary in pre-modern states' (Giddens, 1991: 167).

Cyberspace technology offers great chances to give citizens information about public policies and to involve them in the decision-making process. However, is this what governments want? Although governments often claim that general access to public information is essential, they will usually want to draw the lines of what is accessible themselves. Not only should state institutions have to make information physically accessible, the information should also be presented in formats that are intelligible for the average citizen. And, even more importantly, the whole exercise is futile if the citizen's input is not seriously listened to and reflected in the decision-making.

In many contemporary societies, the democratic structure is critically eroded because those in power govern through arrogance. Citizens can talk however much they want, decisions have already been taken or will be taken irrespective of the citizen's preferences. There is little reason to believe that a system in which the governors do not listen to those they govern, will fundamentally change once its communication channels are digitalized.

'Who polices?' The implementation of human rights, as Hossain (1997: 20) rightly observes requires 'good governance'. 'Governments as well as powerful corporations must adhere to respect human rights and be accountable for their conduct measured by human rights standards.' The serious obstacle here is that increasingly governments are (often voluntarily) losing the regulatory instruments to control the powerful corporations and global governance is increasingly the arena of private business actors. The trade mark of these actors is the refusal to adopt mechanisms for the public accountability of their conduct.

The implementation of the right to communicate requires global governance. As the UNDP 1999 Human Development states, 'The currently dominant governance institutions (such as the World Trade Organization) hamper this potential since their policy frameworks are guided more by commercial than by public interest considerations. Leaving governance to the market place is not likely to stop social exclusion and marginalization. . . . the market alone will make global citizens only of those who can afford it' (UNDP, 1999: 62).

'Who cares?' The democratic nature of a society not only depends upon equality in the distribution of information but also upon the ways in which citizens use the available information. Citizens themselves will also have to be ready to participate actively in public decision-making processes. This participation is wanting in many societies and it is too simple to just blame the failing provision of information. A much more basic problem is low citizen's interest in politics and the lack of credibility politics has. If people were to choose between the political discourse of the Athenian Agora and the Roman Coliseum (where Christians were devoured by lions) many might indeed prefer the entertainment over the political debate. Even where there are possibilities to access alternative information sources, there is usually only a small minority that actively engages in the search for information. Defence of the public interest needs, however, active intervention by civic coalitions that represent the voices of those whose lives are deeply affected by the quality of the world's information flows.

Global civic organizations that represent public interest issues need to mobilize themselves and form alliances with other interested parties for active intervention in the fora of world communication governance. Promising beginnings have been made by the various organizations that make up the Platform for Co-operation on Communication and Democratization. The platform that was established in 1995 is at present made up of AMARC, APC, Article 19, Cencos, Cultural Environment Movement, GreenNet, Grupo de los Ocho, IDOC, IFJ, IPAL, International Women's Tribune Centre, MacBride Round Table, MedTV, One World Online, Panos, People's Communication Charter, UNDA, Vidéazimut, WACC, WETV, Worldview International Foundation. Members of the platform have agreed to work for the formal recognition of the right to communicate to be recognised. Members also emphasize the need to defend and deepen an open public space for debate and actions that build critical understanding of the ethics of communication, democratic policy and equitable and effective access.

The fundamental challenge, however, is still whether sufficiently large numbers of people can be made aware of how critically communications affects their daily lives and how vitally important it is that they take action. Dealing with this challenge should have top priority on the agenda for the realisation of the right to communicate. ■

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GAZETTE

Interfaith dialogue in South Africa

Hundreds of spiritual and religious leaders from around the world are expected in South Africa to take part in a major gathering of theologians and representatives of the world's main religions. Between 6000 and 8000 participants are expected at the Parliament of the World's Religions, which will take place in a picturesque setting at the foot of Table Mountain in Cape Town, South Africa, 1 to 8 December 1999.

According to the organisers, the Chicago-based Council for a Parliament of World Religions (CPWR), the gathering will be more than a scholarly interreligious dialogue – it will also be a celebration and joyful sharing of different faiths by salt-of-the-earth, grassroots believers.

The Parliament – described as a 'non-legislative, educational and celebratory international gathering across credal, racial and national lines' – follows a similar gathering in Chicago in 1993. That event recalled an historic inter-faith meeting 100 years earlier in the same city, the first formal meeting between religions from East and West.

Among the hundreds of religious leaders expected at the Cape Town gathering are: the Dalai Lama, the spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhists world-wide; Dr Abdullah Omar Nasseef of Saudi Arabia, president *of* the World Muslim Congress; Sir Sigmund Sternberg of London, from the International Conference of Christians and Jews; Maha Ghosananda, Supreme Patriarch of Cambodia Buddhism; Master Hsying Yun of Taiwan, founder of the Fo Kuang Shan Buddhist Order; Catholic theologian Hans Küng from Switzerland, principal author of the 1993 Parliament document, *Towards a Global Ethic: An Initial Declaration;* renowned Hindu leader Swami Chidananda *of* India; and Christian feminist theologian Chung Hyun Kyung of South Korea.

Interviewed by telephone, Jane Kennedy, the Parliament's media liaison officer in Cape Town, denied that this conglomeration of divergent beliefs would lead to syncretism, the blending of religions. 'We want to honour and fall in love with our differences, and see God in our differences,' she said.

The gathering will bring together not only theologians and academics, but also lay people. 'We will have a wide cross-section in Cape Town, so that the inter-faith gathering becomes a celebration of our diversity instead of a levelling out of our beliefs, a celebration instead of a fear of our differences.' The programme will also include academic discussions about the identity of the various world religions.

From 'Cape Town will host century's last great inter-faith event' by Noel Bruyris, in ENI Bulletin, *Number 17, 29 September 1999*

Language, the essence of what it means to be human, can be perverted into 'hate speech'. When used by the media, many virulent expressions acquire the stamp of respectability, ensuring that language is the last social system to recover from such degradation. The following article explores this hypothesis with particular reference to Argentina and Rwanda.

It is more than 30 years since George Steiner published his collection of essays 'about language and the crisis of language in our time' (Steiner, 1967). In it he argued that 'language is the defining mystery of man' in which 'identity and historical presence are uniquely explicit' (Steiner, 1969: 16-17).

Rehabilitating language

Philip Lee

One of the essays first appeared in 1959 and caused considerable controversy. However, Steiner made no apology for reprinting 'The Hollow Miracle' since he took the view that the relationship between language and political inhumanity is crucial. The essay argued that after 1945 the German language, repository of Goethe, Heine, Brecht, Thomas Mann, Rilke and Kafka, had 'gone dead'. Why?

> It was one of the peculiar horrors of the Nazi era that all that happened was recorded, catalogued, chronicled, set down; that words were committed to saying things no human mouth should ever have said and no paper made by man should ever have been inscribed with' (Steiner: 1969: 141).

The German language had been cynically perverted and words had become conveyors of terror and falsehood. In the post-war years, a kind of rehabilitation began, hampered by a denial of the past, by revisionist historians and by an unwillingness to recognise what had taken place. 'Everything forgets. But not language. When it has been injected with falsehood, only the most drastic truth can cleanse it' (Steiner, 1969: 150-1).

A considerable difficulty lies in the fact that language is like the air we breathe. Imbibed from childhood, uncritically and ignorant of its socio-cultural and political trappings, we use language in a myriad different contexts and with varying degrees of intent, so that what may be acceptable in the context of a football match becomes irredeemably tainted elsewhere. Most often, as will be seen, it is in the context of conflict that extreme language and incitement to violence are 'justified' in the name of political expedience.

Argentina 1976-83

In 1976 a 'Gentlemen's Coup' took place in Argentina, so-called because, on hearing the news, the famous writer Jorge Luis Borges said, 'Now we are governed by gentlemen'. It initiated what came to be called the 'Dirty War'. Army General Jorge Rafael Videla became president of a three-man junta that included Admiral Emilio E. Massera and Brigadier General Orlando R. Agosti. These men arrived with a plan called the Process for National Reorganisation, the language of which legitimised a regime of political and civil terror whose repercussions are still evident in the country today. During the Dirty War, some 30,000 civilians were kidnapped, tortured and 'disappeared' (murdered).

In a landmark book, Marguerite Feitlowitz has extensively documented the sadism, paranoia and deception that the military dictatorship unleashed on the Argentine people. She pays particular attention to the perversion of language as it was used to conceal and confuse and to domesticate torture and murder.

> Brutal, sadistic and rapacious, the whole regime was intensely verbal. From the moment of the coup, there was a constant torrent of speeches, proclamations, and interviews; even certain military memos were made public. Newspapers and magazines, radio and television all were flooded with messages from the junta. The barrage was constant and there was no escape: Argentinians lived in an echo chamber. With diabolical skill, the regime used language to: (1) shroud in mystery its true actions and intentions, (2) say the opposite of what it meant, (3) inspire trust, both at home and abroad, (4) instil guilt, especially in mothers, to seal their complicity, and (5) sow paralysing terror and confusion. Official rhetoric displays all of the traits we associate with authoritarian discourse: obsession with the enemy, triumphal oratory, exaggerated abstraction, and messianic slogans, all based on 'absolute truth' and 'objective reality' (Feitlowitz, 1998: 20).

Apart from the usual political relabelling, in which human rights are applicable only to people of good will (i.e. those who support the regime), the enemy is anyone who criticises the regime, subversive, aggressive, cowardly, etc. Feitlowitz identifies a whole other vocabulary in which previously innocuous words are given new meanings that, subsequently, are impossible to disentangle from the period of oppression.

For example, the centrepiece of the Argentinians' beloved barbecue is called, in Spanish, *la parrilla*. It is the horizontal grill on which meat is grilled and is also used to indicate the restaurant where such meat is served. But in concentration camp slang, *la parrilla* was the metal table on which prisoners were laid out to be tortured.

Similarly, in a conversation with the mother of a girl who was 'disappeared' – itself both a euphemism and a grammatical perversion – the author discovered that the word for 'parsley' had been appropriated to refer to young children:

> 'Parsley', she says, *perejil*. 'That's what they called our children. Parsley is so abundant here, so cheap, greengrocers traditionally give it away. No, I always tell them, no, I won't say it, I won't have it. That's how they thought of our children – cheap little leaves made for throwing away' (Feitlowitz, 1998: 49).

Feitlowitz found that the slang that developed among torturers was an amalgam of borrowings and inventions. The word *perejil* seems to have derived from the French *persil*, used against agitators for Algerian independence in the 1950s. Other expressions have their roots in Nazi rhetoric and probably originate among the Nazis that Argentina sheltered after the Second World War, many of whom trained Argentine military and police officers.

Such misuse of language helps to ritualise torture, to provide a reason, explanation or objective. One euphemism for torture itself was 'persuasion'. Part of a 380-page secret manual issued by the junta was devoted to a series of orders on terminology. Instead of 'subversive forces', 'subversive elements' was to be used. Instead of 'guerrillas', 'armed bands of subversive criminals'. Instead of 'wearing uniform', 'usurping the use of insignias, emblems and uniforms', etc. The stigmatisation, dehumanisation and criminalisation of ordinary people was an essential strategy for encouraging acquiescence and complicity.

In this way Feitlowitz is able to compile a lexicon of terror in which 'to disappear', an intransitive verb with no object, becomes transitive and acquires an object: to make someone disappear. People are, therefore, 'disappeared', i.e. it will be impossible to discover any information as to where they are or what their fate is. Many were, of course, murdered. *Trasladar*, meaning to transfer or to move, becomes a euphemism for 'to take away to be murdered'. 'Interrogation' equals torture. 'Operation' equals kidnapping. 'Submarine' – a traditional Argentine children's treat consisting of a chocolate bar slowly melting in a cup of warm milk – becomes a form of torture in which a prisoner's head is held under foul water. And so it goes on.

> As the wise novelist Julio Cortázar said, 'Under authoritarian regimes language is the first system that suffers, that gets degraded.' I have come to believe that, even after the regime has ended, language may be the last system to recover (Feitlowitz, 1998: 61).

At first, the government-controlled mass media supported the military dictatorship, reporting the 'convalescence' of the nation after a period of 'sickness' and 'delirium' (*La Prensa* in the early days of the coup). 'Cleansing' was also a theme taken up by the newspapers: cleansing the walls of graffiti, i.e. erasing recent history, cleansing the streets of rubbish and crime, eradicating the *villas miserias* (shantytowns).

Later, courageous journalists began to speak up against the repression, although 'By August 1976, some 100 of the country's most prominent reporters had been forced to leave. And over the course of the regime another 92 journalists would be disappeared' (Feitlowitz, 1998: 159). The English-language *Buenos Aires Herald* was particularly outspoken, especially James Neilson, a well-known Anglo-Argentine journalist. For example, it was the only newspaper to give reliable coverage to the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, in direct contrast to *La Prensa* which one day (16 June 1978) ran an article called 'Plaza de Mayo: Yesterday and Today' that failed to make any mention of the Plaza's grisly history or of the Mothers themselves, who had been a salient feature since 1977.

Rwanda 1990-94

In April 1994, Presidents Habyarimana of Rwanda and Ntaryamira of Burundi, together with other officials and dignitaries, were assassinated when their aeroplane was brought down. This act plunged Rwanda into turmoil and triggered what has come to be known as the Rwandan genocide.

Within hours of the presidential aeroplane crash, the selective assassination of opposition politicians began. Secondary targets were dissidents, journalists, human rights activists, lawyers and civil servants. The primary targets were Tutsi men and boys. Any Tutsi with education was particularly in danger. They were killed by hacking with machetes, shooting, burning alive, drowning in pit latrines and forcing family members to kill each other. These atrocities were reported in large part by the world's mass media.

In total, some 800,000 people were killed, mainly Tutsi, because of their ethnic background, or on the assumption that they were supporters of the 'rebel' Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF). Hutu and Tutsi political leaders were assassinated because of their actual or supposed alliance with the RPF. In retaliation, hundreds of thousands of Hutus were killed by the RPF in the zone it controlled because of their ethnic background, and tens of thousands of Twas (the third ethnic group in Rwanda) were also victims of RPF massacres (in which three-quarters of the Twa population were decimated). The genocide left the country with thousands of widows and orphans and was followed by an exodus of approximately three million people to the neighbouring countries of Burundi, Tanzania and former Zaire.

Rwandan society is largely rural and agrarian. Kinyarwanda, its language, contains many words, expressions and proverbs that reflect this reality. Consequently, when the genocide began, ordinary words took on double meanings. For example, *inyenzi* (cockroach) and *inzoka* (snake) were used to refer to the Tutsi. A call to deal with an infestation of cockroaches or to kill a nest of snakes came to mean killing Tutsis. Many other expressions took on sinister meanings:

- *Uwica imbeba ntababarira ihaka* means 'When you kill a rat, don't spare the one that's pregnant'. In other words, don't just kill the Tutsi man, kill the pregnant mother as well.
- *Urandura urwiri arandurana n'imizi* means 'To get rid of a weed, you have to uproot it.' In other words, kill the father, mother, and grandparents, and, even more barbarously, rip the unborn child out of the pregnant mother.

A cartoon from the newspaper Kangura. It appeared in issue no. 58 of May 1992.

The man of the left is saying: 'There are not enough dead. Tell them to try harder.' He is thinking: 'Now who can accuse me of stealing and killing?' On the right, one of the witnesses is saying: 'Why are we fighting each other? Aren't we being manipulated?'

- *Gukoresha umupanga* means 'To work with a machete'. Normally this would mean to work in the fields or forests using the standard Rwandan tool to cut down plants and trees. But since the tall Tutsis were referred to as 'trees', it meant use a machete to cut down the Tutsis.

These expressions and many more were regularly broadcast on radio in order to incite violence.

Studies have shown that in the prelude to the events of 1994, the Hutu-led government of Rwanda actually sponsored 'hate media' against the Tutsi. As early as May 1990 *Kangura* newspaper began systematic abuse of Tutsis. In December 1990 it published the notorious 'Ten Hutu Commandments', inciting mistreatment of and discrimination against Tutsis. For example, 'any Hutu man that marries, befriends or employs a Tutsi woman will be considered a traitor'; 'every Tutsi is dishonest in business, so any Hutu who does business with a Tutsi is a traitor'; 'Hutus should stop having mercy on Tutsis', etc.

Kangura also began to identify and denounce people as 'enemies', 'accomplices' and 'traitors' secretly working for the RPF. Whatever the newspaper called for usually happened, especially when it related to individuals, and this added to the fear that the newspaper inspired. Eventually, some ten other newspapers joined the 'hate speech' bandwagon and engaged in varying degrees of incitement to ethnic hatred.

Yet the most notorious channel proved to be an 'independent' radio station devoted entirely to an extremist agenda: Radio-Télévision Libre des Mille Collines (RTLM). It began broadcasting in July 1993, conducting a persistent campaign against the Tutsi:

> The language RTLM used to incite genocide indicated that the aim of this 'battle' was not simply to win the armed combat but rather to utterly destroy the opponent. Occasionally the analogy of the battlefield was dropped in favour of something more direct... 'continue to keep your eyes open, remain vigilant and give them the punishment they deserve' (*Broadcasting Genocide*, 1996: 116).

The 'punishment they deserve' was spelt out in subsequent broadcasts: 'he should be arrested and maybe lose his head', 'fight them with the weapons at your disposal: you have arrows, you have spears'; 'you kill him, you burn him'. It became an endless litany of hate.

Despite this evidence, it would be naive to assume that the genocide in Rwanda was in some way 'caused' by the mass media. At worse they abetted the process, in the specific instance of RTLM by identifying targets, broadcasting vehicle number plates, refuges where potential victims were hiding, and so on. Nevertheless, the demonising of the Tutsi, the twisting of language and the use of euphemisms to condone mutilation and murder, remain a source of incitement that cannot be easily disregarded.

Sensitivity to language and public expression

It is too simplistic to blame language for the ills of society, yet it is language that portrays and defines how issues and people are perceived. Propaganda, conveyed by language and defined as verbal or non-verbal communication that attempts to influence motives, beliefs, attitudes or actions, is as old as history (which, ironically, is itself propaganda). All we can do is to sensitise people to language use and the ways it can be manipulated. In this, the modern mass media can undoubtedly play a significant role in constructing a different dialogue about beliefs and attitudes. But a form of journalism that is *for* peace and *against* conflict will depend on the implementation of

new criteria for the way language is used.

In this sense 'language' goes beyond the individual meaning of a word or phrase to the discourse in which it is situated. To this end, some experimental techniques have been explored in a series of conferences organised by the Freedom Forum, based in London. Towards the end of 1998 they revisited the traditional notion that journalists simply report the facts and re-examined the political, social and cultural biases that influence news-making.

The group has made a number of recommendations that deserve in-depth reflection and discussion (see 'What are journalists for?', 1998: 54-55), among which are the following:

- Slogans such as 'terrorist', 'extremist' and 'fundamentalist' should be avoided because they reproduce and sustain essentialist assumptions about human nature and the reasons for conflict.
- The opinions of marginalised parties should be sought not as victims but as participants in a dialogue for creative solutions because unaddressed grievances foster a culture of violence.
- The mainstream remains the mainstream by accepting and reproducing distinctions between the 'legitimate' and the 'deviant'. Rehabilitate the 'deviant' by interrogating the 'legitimate'.
- Challenge the mainstream by discovering 'deviant' initiatives and perspectives in ways that do not present them as aberrant.
- Invite activists to consider the process by which real change might result from their actions.
- Challenge the binary opposition of 'self' and 'other'.
- Flesh out identity by constructing it from many perspectives, not limited to politicians or military or strategic experts.
- Take standards routinely applied to the' other' and turn them on the 'self'.
- Interrogate perspective by comparing logic in the situation at hand with other similar situations.

To which might be added: monitor language use for prejudice, bias, covert and overt distortion.

Of course there is little new in a call for objective reporting. In 1983, journalists around the world agreed a set of International Principles of Professional Ethics in Journalism which, among others, call for: 'honest dedication to objective reality whereby facts are reported conscientiously in their proper context, pointing out their essential connections and without causing distortions... so that the public is provided with adequate material to facilitate the formation of an accurate and comprehensive picture of the world in which the origin, nature and essence of events, processes and states of affairs are understood as objectively as possible' (Principle II).

In other words, as American linguist Benjamin Whorf (1964) pointed out, 'Language is not simply a reporting device for experience, but a defining framework for it.' Definitions matter but the problem, as ever, is one of implementation. If the media are to be objective and to offer fair and balanced representations of reality, they have to begin with language. The words and images they employ must carry truthfulness beyond the norm of getting the facts right into the far more demanding realm of justice and equality.

Would that it were so simple. Rehabilitating language implies rehabilitating history, religion, education, in short everything that comprises 'culture'. Failing that, what realistic possibility is there of ensuring that language, especially public expression, promotes genuine co-operation and understanding instead of sowing discord and division?

In his autobiography, Nelson Mandela, perhaps the 20th century's greatest humanitarian and statesman, writes:

> Without language, one cannot talk to people and understand them; one cannot share their hopes and aspirations, grasp their history, appreciate their poetry or savour their songs. I again realised that we were not different people with separate languages; we were one people, with different tongues (Mandela, 1994: 78).

Without language, human beings cannot 'tell each other what is good and bad, and what is just and unjust' (Aristotle). The supreme value of language is that it makes relationships possible and it is the quality of those relationships that will determine the survival of humankind. ■

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Selective protection: Guarding language in South Africa

David Wanless

In a country like South Africa, several languages are dominant and many others are used by smaller communities. How is it possible to protect this diversity and to encourage the survival of words as ideas?

Most South Africans recognise Kole Omotoso's face. He features as a somewhat shabby, but street-wise African in what is arguably the most successful recent advertising campaign in the country – for a cellular telephone service provider.

Far fewer know that the Nigerian born 'actor' is a Professor of English on the staff of the University of the Western Cape. In a recent article in Cape Town's English morning newspaper (*Cape Times* – 27 July 1999), he lamented the popularisation of English as a global language. Professor Omotoso argues that as English has increasingly stretched itself to become the language of science and technology, the less 'it was able to handle human feelings without sounding fake, jaded or cliché d.'

His comments are timely, not just for the safeguarding of languages in the newly democratic South Africa, but also in the global arena where indigenous languages are in such marked decline. Perhaps more so than in many other countries, the whole question of language rights in South Africa is particularly fraught, given three centuries of intercultural confrontation which culminated in the heresy of apartheid.

Constitutional compromise

The early 1990s were a period of negotiation which saw the ending of the hegemonic control of the apartheid government, whose members were predominantly white and Afrikaans speaking. This led, in 1994, to the country's first free and fair election under universal adult suffrage, and the accession to power of the former liberation movement, the African National Congress.

During the negotiations, the ANC, together with some of the smaller political organisations, had proposed that, like Namibia, which became independent in 1990, English should be the sole official language. The National Party, along with other more extreme right-wing Afrikaans organisations, refused even to countenance the proposal, which would have ended the status Afrikaans had hitherto enjoyed, with English, as an official language.

The result was essentially a constitutional compromise, and consensus was reached that all eleven major languages spoken in South Africa would have the status of 'official'. There are many who welcomed the entrenchment of language rights in the new constitutional dispensation that was agreed upon. In this way, isiNdebele, isiXhosa, isiZulu, Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, Siswati, Xitsonga and Tshivenda were elevated to the status of official languages. The protection of all eleven languages was given formal legal safeguard with the enactment, by Parliament, of the Pan South African Language Board Act (Act No 59 of 1995), which was amended on 23 February 1999.

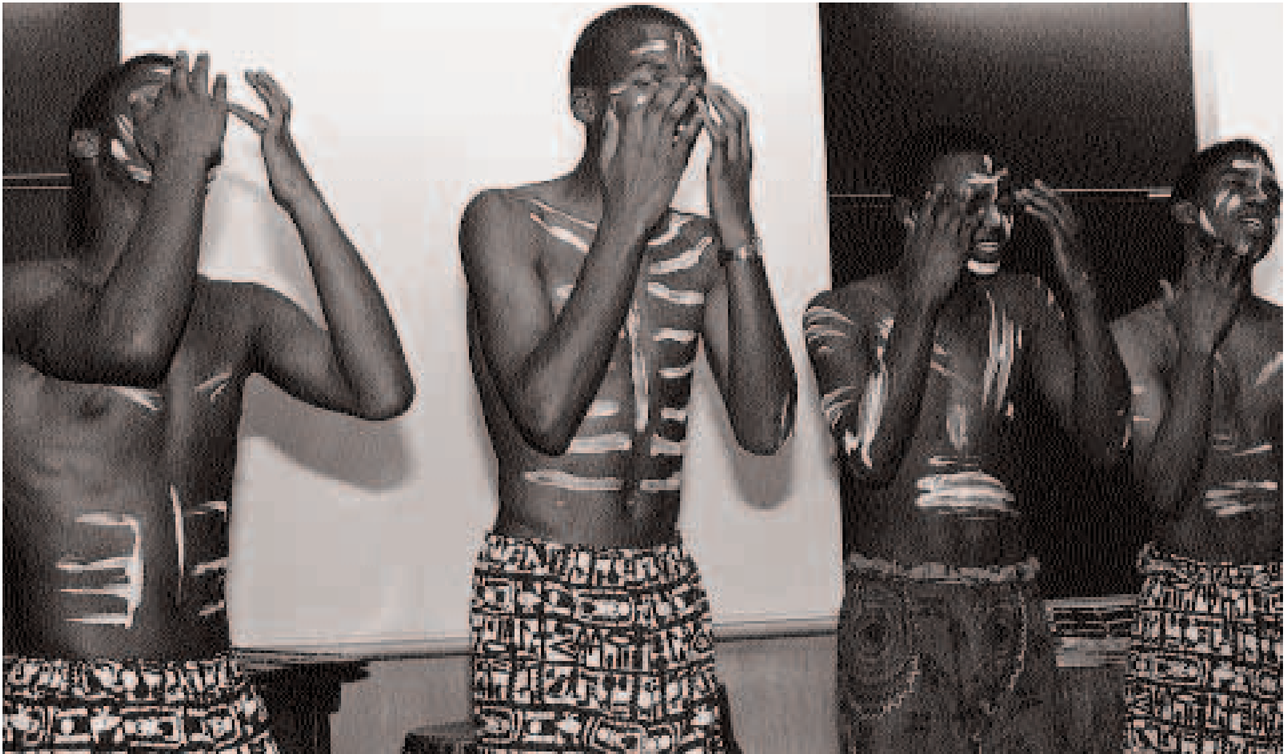
There is a considerable body of opinion however, which considers this seemingly inclusive policy to be flawed. South Africa, with a population of over 42 million, has at least 1 million citizens of Indian and Pakistani extraction. No official status is accorded to Hindi, Tamil, Telegu and other languages of the Indian sub-continent. Neither the Constitution nor the Act offer any protection to the languages of the original inhabitants of what today is geographic South Africa – the !Khoi and the San, referred to in the past as the Hottentot and Bushman people.

Still others lobbied against the exclusion of South African Sign Language from the legal provisions of the Board. Requests for recognition were also received from the Baputhi Language Programme, the Northern Amandebele National Language Organ-isation and a group identified in the Board's 1998 Annual report simply as Valovedu. From the outset, the sceptics had a field day, suggesting that the Board would have an impossible task ensuring that road signs were correctly displayed in all eleven languages. The potential for disorder was nowhere more acutely experienced than in the field of broadcasting.

From the inception of radio in the 1930s and television in 1975, only the Roman Catholic and 'mainline' Protestant churches were allocated broadcasts. The only exception was the Jewish faith, whose major festivals were broadcast live from synagogues four times a year. Until 1994, the South African Broadcasting Corporation enjoyed a near total monopoly in broadcasting, and was firmly under government control. A process of transformation began in 1993, within which it was agreed that, as the public broadcaster, the SABC had a duty to give airtime to all major faiths.

Only the die-hard traditionalists had difficulty with the principle that each major faith community should be allowed broadcast rights in proportion to each membership, as reflected in the national census from time to time.

The practicality proved to be more difficult to implement than the theory had been to devise. Combining religious equity and encouraging language diversity produced a virtually insoluble conundrum. With the public broadcaster statutorily required to offer radio and television services that reflected the language demographics, the SABC maintained separate radio services for all eleven language groups.



Members of a group of young musicians and dancers performing in their mother tongue, Xhosa, during WACC's Central Committee meeting held in Cape Town, South Africa earlier this year.

The difficulty came in trying to decide, for instance, how many Jewish Xhosa speakers or Muslim Venda speakers there were, and how to allocate religious airtime equitably to each language group. Neither the SABC nor the PANSALB have been able thus far to establish a clear policy

A language policy for the whole of South Africa

The Pan South African Language Board, established under the Act, is charged with:

- creating the conditions for the development of, and equal use of, all official languages;
- fostering respect for and encouraging the use of other languages in the country;
- encouraging the best use of the country's linguistic resources, in order to enable South Africans to free themselves from all forms of linguistic discrimination, domination and division, and to enable them to exercise appropriate linguistic choices for their own well being as well as for national development; and
- developing the previously marginalised languages.

The Act laid down how the Board was to be constituted. It was to include practising language workers – an interpreter, a translator, a terminologist or lexicographer and a literacy teacher. It also provided for the appointment of three persons who were 'language planners'; five persons with special knowledge of language matters in South Africa; and one expert with legal knowledge of language legislation.

If we allow that such bureaucratically restricting requirements are theoretically sensible and legally necessary, implementing the theory has once again proved problematic. In its 1998 Annual Report, the Board highlights that fact that it is under-resourced. All Board members serve in an honorary, part-time capacity. Its only income in the 1997-8 financial year was a government grant of 1.65 million South African Rands (equivalent at current exchange rates to 160,000 pounds sterling) – hardly a sufficient amount to carry out its extensive mandate.

The report notes, inter alia, that 'Due to lack of staff, the sub-committee could not implement its plans for a national language awareness campaign and a week-long festival'. It does, however, reflect genuine attempts to interact with official bodies such as the Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology. It has also actively co-operated with the Department of Education, in promoting home language instruction in the school system.

The Board organised a Consultative Meeting on Translation and Interpretation on 11 & 12 June 1998. It was attended by over 250 delegates, including resource persons from Kenya, Malaysia, Australia and Sweden. A sub-Committee has been formed to establish a database and liaise with tertiary institutions on the status and development of African language programmes.

It is in this area that the Board's greatest challenge and potential for endeavour lie. Although not yet dealt with formally in its structures, two anecdotal incidents can highlight the enormity of the problem.

Newspapers and academic journals occasionally report the fact that the languages spoken by South Africa's earliest inhabitants – the !Khoi and San – are threatened with extinction. Researchers in the Kalahari desert area are engaged in a process of recording the lexicography of

one particular !Khoi dialect, of which there is only one surviving speaker, whose estimated age is in the 90s. A group of San, whose origins in the !Xu and Khwe tribes of southern Angola are lost in the mists of time, have been caught in the changing political dispensation of southern Africa.

They supported the Portuguese army during the colonial years in Angola. The group then aligned themselves with the South African army during its campaign against the then liberation movement SWAPO, which fought for the independence of Namibia. Unable to remain in Namibia after independence, they are now settled on land within South Africa, 18 kilometres from the diamond-mining centre of Kimberley. The Johannesburg newspaper the *Star*, in its edition of 13 July 1999, reports that the Bathlaping tribe has lodged a claim to the land. It quotes an expert on San culture, one Major Charles Hallet, as saying that they are 'a tribe staring extinction in the face as modern values absorb tribal customs. Their complex language with 2,000 sound combinations will also eventually disappear.'

The report further indicates that 2,000 young people out of a total population of 4,400 'are part of the Nike and T-shirt era. This is very worrying to the tribal elders, who fear absorption by other cultures and the extinction of an ancient people. It is a form of ethnic absorbing rather than ethnic cleansing,' Hallet concludes.

The death of ideas

The author's wife was a junior schoolteacher at the Red Cross Children's Hospital School in Cape Town. In the process of teaching short- and long-term patients, she had to give instruction in English, Afrikaans and Xhosa. She was not particularly disturbed at the use of English by the children learning computer literacy. In addition, Afrikaans is a language that developed from the original Dutch and has, over three centuries, diverged from the original due to the incorporation of many African and English words.

A worrying trend for her was that Xhosa speaking children regularly, and seemingly without thinking, did not use the Xhosa words, but rather indigenised English words to denote common objects. Thus, instead of using the word for fish – 'intlanzi' – they would refer to a picture in a lesson book as 'iFish' or 'iLion' instead of 'ingonyama'. In addition, they, along with speakers of other languages who are part of the McDonald's generation, consider 'thru' as the correct way to spell through. The extinction of Xhosa is a long way off compared to the situation of the !Khoi and San languages referred to earlier, but the same process is at work.

Ultimately the problem is not simply one of words, but of ideas. As Eugene Nida noted some years ago: 'Words are symbols, par excellence.'[1] When we consider the disappearance of ancient languages, we are grappling with the possible death of the ideas that words, as symbols, convey.

South Africa's then Deputy President, Thabo Mbeki, understood that truth well when he addressed Parliament on the occasion of the adoption of the country's Constitution:

> 'I am an African', he said. 'I owe my being to the Khoi and San whose desolate souls haunt the great expanses of the beautiful Cape – they who fell victim to the most merciless genocide our native land has ever seen. I am formed of the migrants who left Europe to find a new life in our native land. Whatever their own actions, they remain still, part of me. In my veins courses the blood of the Malay slaves who came from the East. I am the grandchild of the warrior men and women that Hintsa and Sekukhune led, the patriots that Cetshwayo and Mpephu took to battle, the soldiers Moshoeshe and Ngungunyane taught never to dishonour the cause of freedom'.
>
> He continued: 'I have seen what happens when one person has superiority of force over another, when the stronger appropriate to themselves the prerogative even to annul the injunction that God created all men and women in His image.'[2]

South Africa has embarked upon a process of re-discovering its rich history and the diversity of its people, their languages and ideas. The Constitution acknowledges that we will refuse to accept that our race, colour, gender or historical origins shall define our Africanness. We are committed to celebrating our diversity, and the establishment of a Language Board to safeguard and promote linguistic diversity and heritage is just one small step in that larger process.

Professor Omotoso's words in his critique of English are salient. He posits the thesis that 'English has abandoned religion, spiritualism, truth – human concepts which used to be understood before the arrival of Western civilisation.' Those who promote the universalistion of one tongue 'forget that the languages we are asked to abandon are not just words but the bearers and containers of knowledge. Knowledge from which the world should benefit. What faiths and languages of value have controlled our earth till now? And next, since their gods have failed, may ours not yield forgotten ways that remedy?'

The words of a traditional San song come to mind:

'The day we die
A soft breeze will wipe out
our footprints in the sand.
When the wind dies down,
who will tell the timelessness
that once we walked this way
living in time?' ■

1 Nida, E: (1960), *Message and Mission*. Harper Row, New York.
2 Mbeki, T: (1996), 70/00/govdocs/speeches/1996/sp0508.03

David Wanless is an ordained minister who has worked professionally in the media. He was announcer/producer for the SABC English radio service for four years and has broadcast on radio and television in South Africa and Zimbabwe for over 25 years. He is former director of communication for the South African Council of Churches (SACC), editing its publications *Kairos* and *Ecunews*. He is currently co-ordinator of the Ecumenical News Network southern Africa and media officer of the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa.

Depriving a person of their mother tongue is an evil comparable with isolating them from their history, culture and spirituality. The following article touches on the sensitive issue of the United Church of Canada's involvement in the Indian Residential School system and the pain and suffering it caused. It calls for reflection on the issues raised as people of faith continue to travel 'the difficult road of repentance, reconciliation and healing.'

> 'The most terrible result of my residential school experience was they took away my ability to hold my children. They took that from me, the ability to hold my children.' – Inez Deiter, in *From our Mothers' Arms,* written by her daughter, Constance Deiter.

From our mothers' arms

Linda Slough

When the WACC Central Committee met in Cape Town, South Africa in June 1999, we heard and saw the evidence of the long struggle with apartheid and the efforts of the people of South Africa to now find reconciliation and healing. For me, the stories and discussion made real connections to the history of Aboriginal peoples in Canada. Currently, my church, The United Church of Canada, is just coming to terms with its part in this history as it becomes more and more aware of the damage done by a system of removing Aboriginal children from their homes and placing them in residential schools.

The practice of sending First Nations children away to school began in the 1840s, often with the support of First Nations leaders. By the 1860s, resistance mounted when the practice became more widespread and, from the perspective of First Nations communities, more coercive and paternalistic. Prior to the western treaties, the official Canadian policy was to protect, civilize, and assimilate the Indian.[1] The Gradual Civilization Act, passed in 1857, called for the eventual assimilation of Indians into Canadian society. In 1876, the Parliament of Canada passed the Indian Act, which effectively rendered all Aboriginal people children before the law, legal wards of the Crown. An Indian Affairs department was created in 1889, and Indian agents placed across the country. As the local authority, which dispensed the money promised to First Nations peoples in treaties, the Indian agent could threaten to withhold the money from increasingly destitute Aboriginal parents if they did not send their children away to school.

The term 'residential school' only came into formal use during the 1920s; prior to then such institutions were officially called 'industrial' or 'boarding' schools. At these schools, in all areas of their lives – eating, sleeping, playing, working, speaking – the children were isolated from the traditions, culture and language of their home Nations. Separation time varied, but it was not uncommon for children to be away from their parents and villages for years, except for a brief period of time in summer vacation.

The United Church of Canada was one of the churches that, on behalf of the federal government, administered the residential school system. In part, the Indian work, as it was known, arose out of a desire to share the Good News of Jesus Christ and a deep sense of compassion and commitment to justice.

The church, and its predecessors, the Methodist and Presbyterian churches, had long demonstrated the belief that education should be available to all children. Access to education for children of low-income families was an important strategy in the struggle to secure greater justice. As the traditional economies of First Nations peoples came under heavy pressure, with the killing of the buffalo and the creation of reserves, many in the church felt the best way to assist First Nations was to provide means to educate the young in new economic systems and trade, hence industrial schools. The *Moderator's Taskgroup on Residential Schools (1991)* notes that the residential schools were seen by the churches not only as a vehicle for converting Native people to the Christian faith, but also as a way of equipping the younger generation of Native people to survive in a world where the old ways had either been destroyed or were considered unworkable or unworthy or both.

> 'The problem was that the church required Native people to repent of being Native people if they wished to follow the Christian way' said *the Moderator's Taskgroup on Residential Schools (1991)*

The residential schools were built on a racist understanding of the superiority of European civilization and the inferiority of Aboriginal societies. Natives were considered 'savages' and as British Columbia Indian Commissioner I. W. Powell noted: 'Barbarism can only be cured by education.' This racist premise was reinforced by the churches in their theology and their attitudes toward Native spirituality.

Denying language

Different cultures have different ways of transmitting their culture. Institutions, like schools and churches, played a major role in European based cultures. The traditional native way was heavily dependent upon oral traditions. Removal from their home Nation and denial of language, a prime carrier of culture, meant many people had no sense of history or home – they did not know who they were. While residential schools removed the basis for a native identity, they were not able to construct a new white identity. The result was that many left residential school unsure of who they were and where they belonged. A Saulteaux Nation friend told me that the people from her

reserve spoke of the returnees from residential school as the 'crazy ones, good for nothing'. They didn't know their own people's ways and language and could not fit in to their own society.

The most eloquent descriptions of the pain and the courage and the resourcefulness of First Nations children come from these stories told by First Nations people themselves.

From the book *Bridges in Spirituality, First Nations Christian Women Tell Their Stories*, published jointly by the United Church Publishing House (UCPH) and the Anglican Book Centre, Gladys Taylor Cook's story:

"I was four when I went away to residential school. I'll always remember—I didn't want to leave my mother. My grandmother made me a beautiful string of beads when I left. She tied them around my neck saying, 'This is so you'll know you're loved. Always remember this, no matter how far away you are.'

When they took us away, I looked back and saw my mother crying. When I got to residential school, they took off all our clothes, and then they cut our hair, and they cut the string of beads from my neck, the beads my grandmother gave me. I cried in my own language, 'No! No! Don't do that! That's from my granny.' I scrambled to try to pick them up; I was crawling on the floor clutching them, trying to get as many as I could. 'Put them in the garbage,' the woman yelled, and she hit me on the hand with a ruler to make me let them go. I managed to keep one by hiding it in my mouth. I was afraid to lose the tie with my grandmother. I kept that bead for a very long time. I didn't tell my grandmother what had happened. To tell her what had happened would have hurt her, so I carried that pain.

I'll never forget the first time I was caught speaking my own language. We were playing tag, a whole group of us, laughing and running around outside. One of the children was 'it', and I tagged her. Being 'it', she was now a 'monkey' until she tagged someone else. Then she would tag her to be whatever she wanted to call her, and so we were having our fun. When I called in my language 'monkey! monkey!' to warn the other children, I didn't even see the teacher standing close by, partly hidden by the side of a building on the girls' side.

She asked me what I said, and I told her, laughing. But she grabbed hold of me, took me to the bathroom and told me to open my mouth and shoved a bar of soap in my mouth. It was the old-fashioned strong soap we used to have. It just made me gag. I felt so sick. I tried to brush my teeth again and again. It took so long to get the taste of that soap out of my mouth. Sometimes I can still taste it."

In the book, *From Our Mothers' Arms, The Intergenerational Impact of Residential Schools in Saskatchewan,* published by UCPH, author Constance Deiter describes the development of sign language:

"While no doubt there were other forms of resistance used by the children, one of the most interesting was sign language. The language was developed in response to the need for children to communicate; not unlike the start of sign language for deaf children. For the children at the schools, not talking was the norm. The Victorian ideal 'children are to be seen and not heard' was carried to the extreme. In addition, children were forbidden to speak their native language. As well, children from different tribal groups were often placed together, which discouraged use of a common native language. All of these reasons contributed to the start of some silent means of communication – a sign language.

There has not been anything written about this silent form of communication used at the schools. To my knowledge, this will be the first. I knew about the language as a young girl. My father and mother would use the sign language when they did not want my siblings and me to know what they were communicating. I forgot about their use of the language until many years later. My father had passed away, and my younger sister's daughter was diagnosed as profoundly deaf. I asked my mother if my niece could use the sign language that she and my father used when we were children. She said no, that that was the sign language they used at residential school.

As a student of anthropology at the University of Alberta, I found the sign language fascinating. First of all, it was children who devised a standardized sign language that was used across western Canada. I believe it was standardized in that my father and my mother understood each other. Yet my father was sixteen years older than my mother and had attended the File Hills residential school and the Birtle school in Brandon, while my mother attended the Roman Catholic schools and Anglican residential school at a much later date…

The sign language consisted of a two-handed letter system and body gestures. As an adult, Inez Deiter attended an American sign language course for her granddaughter. She showed the instructor the sign language she used at residential school. The instructor informed her that the language she used was the British form of signing. This particular form is no longer in use in the Americas, indicating that whoever introduced the sign language into the residential school did so before American sign language became the norm for the deaf community.

While there needs to be further research done on the introduction of this sign language, to me its very existence puts a new perspective on the residential school experience. The idea that these children, despite the hardships, found a means of communicating with one another is remarkable. The method in which the language was taught to newcomers is very much like any other language instruction. Inez Deiter said it took her a year to learn all the signs and gestures. The fact that this language endured over several generations is even more astounding and more language-like. Mel H. Buffalo attended the Edmonton residential school during the 1960s where he says the gestures were still in use – for example, a pulled ear meant a supervisor was coming."

These children were denied the basic right to speak, let alone the right to speak in their own language, so they developed a language they could use. This language should be a testament to the intelligence, spirit, and resourcefulness of First Nations children.

In 1986, the highest governing body of The United Church of Canada, the General Council, issued the following apology to its First Nations brothers and sisters.

North American Indian languages

The Amerindian languages have been classified into over 50 families, showing many kinds and degrees of interrelationship. However, this allows a great deal of scope for further classification, and Amerindian linguistics has thus proved to be a controversial field, generating many proposals about the links between and within families. It is not known whether the languages have a common origin.

Eskimo-Aleut is the name given to a small group of languages spoken in the far north, in Alaska, Canada, and Greenland, and stretching along the Aleutian Islands into Siberia. Eskimo is the main language, spoken in many dialects by around 90,000. Its two main branches – Yupik in Alaska and Siberia, Inupiaq (Inuit, or Inuktitut) elsewhere – are sometimes classified as separate languages. Greenlandic Eskimo has official status in Greenland, alongside Danish. A standard written form dates from the mid-19th century. There are also a few hundred speakers remaining of Aleut.

Further south, the *Na-Dené* group consists of over 30 languages, spoken in two main areas: Alaska and north-west Canada, and south-west central USA. Most of the languages belong to the Athabaskan family, whose best known member is Navaho, with around 120,000 speakers – one of the few Amerindian languages which has actually increased in size in recent years.

The *Algonquian* family is geographically the most widespread, with over 30 languages covering a broad area across central and eastern Canada, and down through central and southern USA. Many well-known tribes are represented.

There are also over 30 languages whose relationship to the main language groups in North America has not so far been determined. Over 20 of these are the Salish languages, spoken along the Canadian/USA Pacific coastline, and some way inland. They include Bella Coola, Okanogan, Shuswap, and Squamish. These days, the numbers of speakers are very small – fewer than 1,000.

Adapted from The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language*, by David Crystal. Cambridge University Press (1987, revised 1991).*

> 'Long before my people journeyed to this land, your people were here, and you received from your elders understanding of creation and mystery that surrounds us all, that was deep and to be treasured. We did not hear you when you shared your vision. In our zeal to tell you the good news of Jesus Christ we were closed to the values of your spirituality. We confused western ways and culture with the depth and breadth and length and height of the gospel of Christ. We imposed our civilization as a condition of accepting the gospel. We tried to make you like us and in doing so we helped destroy the vision that made you what you were. As a result you and we are poorer. And the image of the creator in us is twisted and blurred and we are not what we are meant to be. We ask you to forgive us and to walk together with us in the spirit of Christ so that our people may be blessed and God's creation held.'
>
> *Robert S. Smith, Moderator of The United Church of Canada, Sudbury, 1986.*

And on 27 October 1998, twelve years later, after the Executive of General Council spent two days reflecting on the meaning of repentance, the Moderator of the United Church, the Right Reverend Bill Phipps said:

> 'I am here today as Moderator of The United Church of Canada to speak the words that many people have wanted to hear for a very long time. On behalf of The United Church of Canada I apologize for the pain and suffering that our church's involvement in the Indian Residential School system has caused. We are aware of some of the damage that this cruel and ill-conceived system of assimilation has perpetrated on Canada's First Nations peoples. For this we are truly and most humbly sorry.
>
> To those individuals who were physically, sexually and mentally abused as students of the Indian Residential Schools in which The United Church of Canada was involved, I offer you our most sincere apology. You did nothing wrong. You were and are the victims of evil acts that cannot under any circumstances be justified or excused. We pray that you will hear the sincerity of our words today and that you will witness the living out of this apology in our actions in the future.
>
> We know that many within our church will still not understand why each of us must bear the scar, the blame for this horrendous period in Canadian history. But the truth is we are the bearers of many blessings from our ancestors, and therefore we must also bear their burdens. We must now seek ways of healing ourselves, as well as our relationships with First Nations peoples. This apology is not an end in itself. We are in the midst of a long and painful journey. A journey that began with the United Church's Apology of 1986, to our Statement of Repentance in 1997 and now moving to this apology with regard to Indian Residential Schools. As Moderator of The United Church of Canada I urge each and every member of the church, to reflect on these issues and to join us as we travel this difficult road of repentance, reconciliation and healing.'

The journey continues. ■

Linda Slough received her teaching accreditation through the University of Saskatchewan, Canada, took further classes at the University of Regina and worked for 16 years as an elementary school teacher in Regina. She expanded her interest in learning of all kinds and in 1994 received a Dip[loma in Adult Education from St Francis Xavier University, Antigonish, Nova Scotia. For many years she worked as a volunteer in the United Church of Canada (UCC), chairing the Saskatchewan Division of Mission 1982-85 and working with the Saskatchewan Programme Staff Team 1987-96. In March 1996 she moved to Toronto to become General Secretary of the UCC's General Council Division of Communication.

Tok Pisin and Tok Ples as languages of identification in Papua New Guinea

Philip Cass

After the Second World War missions in Papua New Guinea faced new imperatives driven by the reaction of the Australian administration to UN directives. As a result the administration decided to use English as the sole language of education. These changes led to the closure of Tok Ples schools and the end of Tok Ples as the primary language of education for indigenous people. Most significantly, however, Tok Pisin came into its own as a lingua franca. These factors combined to shift the role of language as an identifier from a purely village or regional level (Tok Ples) to a national one (Tok Pisin) Subsequent educational policies have reversed this situation. This article argues that for a country with so many languages the temporary sacrifice of a few indigenous languages was justified. Implicit in the paper is the argument that Tok Pisin should be treated as a language indigenous to PNG and that attempts to suppress it or dismiss it by metropolitan administrations and missions failed completely because it was a language that grew out of the people themselves.

As the result of pressure brought about by the United Nations in the 1950s and 1960s, the Australian administration in the then Territory of Papua and New Guinea decided to adopt English as the sole language for education in territory schools. This recommendation was intended to hurry the development of an educated native elite which would serve as the core leadership of an independent PNG. The changes in education policy which were adopted by the administration should be seen in the context of earlier Australian decisions about its role in the territory.[1] The then Australian Minister for Territories, Sir Paul Hasluck, had already outlined the objectives of the Territory administration as being, among others, to:

> '…achieve mass literacy, that is to say, to attempt to teach all native children to read and write in a common language. [and]…when, in generations to come, they may be required to manage their own affairs to a greater degree, they may feel a common bond among themselves as people.'[2]

The significance of Hasluck's statement is that the idea of national identity, of creating a national consciousness among 1000 tribes, was already linked, however unconsciously, with literacy and education by the 1950s. Until then, the identity fostered by such education as there had been through the mission schools, had been with a particular mission or region. The administration's hope of establishing English as the national language failed, for while it produced the elite desired by the UN, it has remained a language of the elite. What nobody seems to have anticipated is that it would be Tok Pisin, the much reviled language of the plantation worker and *haus boi*, which would become the lingua franca.

The decision to use English as the sole language of instruction in schools was, in terms of the UN demands, perfectly rational. With up to 1000 local languages, there was at this stage no effective lingua franca that could serve in both the Australian territories. Tok Pisin prevailed in some parts of New Guinea, but was regarded with suspicion elsewhere. Motu was widespread in Papua and might eventually have provided a national lingua franca. English was widely spoken only in Milne Bay.

Because of Australian neglect of Papua and New Guinea before the Second World War, in most places not only education, but health services, shipping and in some cases trade for natives was solely in the hands of the missions.[3]

The first missions to reach Papua and New Guinea in the 19th century were, naturally, concerned with local language issues and of necessity used Tok Ples languages for evangelisation and initial communication. The local language thus used became identified with membership of a particular mission, or lotu, and can be regarded as having been used as a Tok Lotu. In some areas there was one dominant language, while some found themselves in an area with one dominant or at least widely recognised language, such as Kuanua on the Gazelle peninsula or Dobuan in Milne Bay. In rare cases a mission might choose a range of local languages and then export them to other language areas, as the Lutherans did on the north coast with Kate, Gaged and Jabem. The Divine Word missionaries in the Sepik, however, found that because of the linguistic diversity of the area they could find no common language and ultimately settled on a policy of using Tok Ples for evangelisation and contact, but used German in the mission schools. After the First World War they were forced to abandon German and decided to use Tok Pisin, thus giving it the status of a lotu language.

The Australian administration faced a completely different task after the Second World War. If they were to

have any chance of uniting the territory it had to be through language. The only way to implement this policy was to use English as the sole language of education and this meant teaching in any other language had to be actively discouraged. The administration placed pressure on the mission Tok Ples schools through a policy of subsidies, new teaching standards and inspection regimes. The administration refused to subsidise mission schools which did not have properly qualified staff and since these were generally the village schools where Tok Ples was used, it meant the end of these schools and the end of the missions' financial independence from the government.[4]

There was debate then, as now, about whether the administration's policy made sense in terms of education and whether children learn best in their own language for the first few years and then switch to English or whether they should they use English all the way through.[5] What is certain is that for the purpose of establishing a universal language of instruction and rapidly creating the national elite demanded by the UN, that the administration believed that Tok Ples had to be temporarily sacrificed.

By insisting on the use of English as the only language of instruction, the administration effectively eliminated Tok Ples as a language by which people could identify themselves through the lotu. Being able to speak English meant being able to leave the village, work for the Australians, to travel and generally to leave the influence of the mission, thus eliminating at a stroke the role of the mission as the chief identifier outside the clan and family system.

To travel meant coming into contact with people who spoke other languages and thus the need to speak Tok Pisin fluently. I would argue that Tok Pisin became for many people a new identifier language, a process expressed most succinctly in the term *wanpisin* which can now be found as a replacement for *wantok*. If before a person identified themselves through their Tok Ples or Tok Lotu, then we now find people identifying themselves through the dialect of Tok Pisin they speak. The Australian administration's one language was later compromised by the introduction of Tok Pisin and the re-introduction of Tok Ples as languages of instruction, but in its initial implementation, the one language policy can be seen to have unwittingly opened the way for the development of Tok Pisin as a lingua franca.

A lingua franca for work

The missions fought the changes vigorously, not just from a pedagogical standpoint, but because they saw the move as damaging the relationships that were framed by the school, the local church and the community.[6] However, all the missions had to contend with the fact that the population movements caused by labour recruiting meant that people had to learn Tok Pisin to be able to work and converse on plantations in other districts. When they came home they brought Tok Pisin with them, just as the Tolais returning from sandalwood ships and the Samoan plantations had done in the 1880s. Tok Pisin provided a ready made lingua franca, but many missions remained opposed to it on the grounds that it was not a real language or capable of expressing complex ideas.[7]

The different missions approached the question of Tok Pisin in different ways. Even when a mission ostensibly devoted its energies to working in Tok Ples and maintaining them as lotu languages it still used Tok Pisin for general communication. Some missions which had been instrumental in transliterating local languages began preaching in Tok Pisin as a matter of necessity as early as the 1940s. The movement of plantation workers meant that there were Methodists and other Protestants in Rabaul, for instance, who could not be ministered to in their own Tok Ples. They were catered for with Tok Pisin services and a book of Tok Pisin hymns was produced.[8] Tok Pisin services were held for indigenous workers from other districts, but until these were established workers from New Ireland and Nakani attended Kuanua services at Malakuna village.[9]

In the 1950s Tok Pisin services continued to be held for Rabaul workers. Lutheran and LMS missionaries in Rabaul held services in many languages for workers from around the country, such as Toaripi for LMS people. The Methodists held Dobuan services for workers from Milne Bay. Methodists, LMS, and Lutherans worked closely together and the Methodists often preached in LMS and Lutheran services through interpreters or in Tok Pisin.[10] Close co-operation with other Protestant missions had wider effects. By the 1960s the Methodist bookshop/ printery in Rabaul was buying Tok Pisin material from other and selling it alongside its own Kuanua literature.[11] As the Methodists moved towards the creation of the Uniting Church in 1965-67, the mission used explanatory literature in both Kuanua and Tok Pisin.[12] By the 1970s Tok Pisin was being used as language of debate in Synod and from 1972 minutes were recorded in Tok Pisin, not English.[13]

The Lutheran mission in PNG placed just as much emphasis on the use of lotu languages as the Methodists, but also used Tok Pisin to preach when necessary. The official acceptance of the language did not occur until 1956 and even then care was taken not to endanger the existing policy of using the three Tok Lotu, Jabem, Graged and Kate, for purposes of evangelisation. Once the Lutherans (reorganised as the Evangelical Lutheran Church of New Guinea in 1956) had accepted that Tok Pisin was acceptable for official purposes, it was used for other purposes as well. The three church newspapers became bilingual and the Lotu Book appeared alongside Tok Ples publications.[14]

The significance of this should not be underestimated. The Lutheran and Methodist missions had been the first people to produce newspapers in New guinea, and certainly the first to produce written material for the indigenous population. By making Tok Pisin material available at a time when the number of Tok Pisin speakers was growing, the churches were, wittingly or not, tapping into a new market.

ELCONG's response to the changes in the administration's language policy was reluctantly pragmatic. While fighting to retain vernacular education through its village Bible schools, it established a Tok Pisin school system. The loss of the vernacular school system meant that increasing numbers of students became illiterate in their own language (or at least their lotu language) and so the

church was forced by circumstance to communicate with them in Tok Pisin. Lutheran records show the majority of Tok Pisin materials being created from the mid 1960s, such as a pastors' refresher course in 1964. However, there are records of a few earlier documents such as a Tok Pisin/Kate pamphlet on the relationship of the church to the secular world (Zurewec, 1958). Lists of Tok Pisin documents from this period include *Sampela Litugi bilong Lotu* (Amman, 1967). However, the records still show most work being produced in this period as being in Kate, Jabem and Graged. The earliest school materials in Tok Pisin date from 1967, but most are from 1969.[15] Most ELCONG publications are now printed in Tok Pisin. The publication of the *Nupela Testamen* in 1969 was what gave Tok Pisin respectability.[16] Produced in collaboration with the Catholic SVD mission, it was also a manifestation of the growing ecumenical spirit in PNG.

Having been so intimately involved with the media since their earliest days it was only natural that the mission churches should recognise their obligations to the contemporary media. The most tangible expression of this is Word Publishing, a company whose major shareholders include the Anglican, Catholic, Uniting and Lutheran churches. Word publishes, among other newspapers, *Wantok*, the country's only Tok Pisin newspaper.[17]

Origins of the *Wantok* newspaper

To trace the origins of *Wantok*, we have to go back to the earliest days of the Catholic Divine Word (SVD) mission. As we have already seen, the SVDs were forced by circumstances of history and geography to accept Tok Pisin as a lingua franca. It became the official mission language in north east New Guinea from 1931.[18] Before the Second World War broke out some catechital literature had been printed. A Tok Pisin newspaper, *Frend Bilong Mi* was also published intermittently by the mission, but it was no longer lived than any of the later commercial or administration Tok Pisin publications.[19]

As the SVDs began to expand into the Highlands in the 1930s, it became clear that the policy of adopting Tok Pisin was beginning to pay off. Bishop Leo Arkfeld asserted that resistance in the Highlands to imported Tok Ples had been strong and he stressed the flexibility of Tok Pisin as a language that could be carried from one language group to another.[20] However, not all the SVD missionaries were enamoured of Tok Pisin. Fr Ernst Montag complained in his memoirs that:

> 'Pidgin was a synthetic language, one that was composed purposely to suit the primitiveness of the aborigines. The vocabulary is meagre. Many words have several meanings. Just this gives rise to the possibility of misunderstandings and inaccuracies.'[21]

The possibility of misunderstandings and inaccuracies existed because there was no standard orthography. Although Frs Kirschbaum and Meisner had produced Tok Pisin dictionaries, the fact that different pronunciations and loan words obtained in different districts, made it difficult to pin the language down precisely.[22] The first real attempt to produce an academically acceptable dictionary was Fr Frank *Mihalic's Jacaranda Dictionary and Grammar of Melanesian Pidgin* in 1971. And yet even Mihalic initially saw Tok Pisin as a transitional stage towards the widespread use of and literacy in standard English.

> 'I am looking forward to the day when Neo-Melanesian and this book will be buried and forgotten, when standard English and the Oxford dictionary will completely replace both.'[23]

By the second edition he admitted that Tok Pisin had not gone away:

> 'Despite his admiration for and use of English, the New Guinean does not identify with it. English to him is and will remain a status symbol, a prestige language... It will always be his first foreign language of choice. But it does remain a foreign language. It is never really his, whereas he feels that Pidgin is.'[24]

In the second edition spellings were revised to conform with usage in the *Nupela Testamen*. It was decided to standardise the Tok Pisin orthography using the north coast dialect as a 'high Pidgin' because Madang Pidgin was held to be the least affected by Anglicisation.

Mihalic's greatest achievement was to bring to fruition an idea that had begun with Bishop Adolph Noser and been supported by Bishop Arkfeld, that of beginning a Tok Pisin publication for PNG. *Wantok* fulfilled a long standing commitment by the mainstream churches to the media in PNG.

Quite apart from Mihalic's sheer obstinacy *Wantok's* success was probably due as much to the fact that it emerged at a time when a critical mass of Tok Pisin had developed. Some correlation could be drawn between the growing number of students at the end of the 1960s and early 1970s and the growth of the paper. Official figures showed more than a quarter of a million students enrolled in primary, secondary, technical and tertiary education in 1971.[25] Despite this, English did not take hold as a lingua franca. This could be due to the fact that Tok Pisin proved adequate for the needs of the bulk of the population who felt no need to become fluent in English and who were in any case regularly and exposed through schools and various formal and other media to written Tok Pisin.[26] School leavers literate in Tok Pisin appear to have been regarded as a primary market for *Wantok*. In the paper's 100th edition Mihalic wrote:

> 'Planti student I pinisim praimeri skul tasol, na bikpela lain gen I save lusim haiskul long Fom 2. Tru, ol I no inap ritim gut ol buk na niuspepap long tok Inglis. Wantok I wok long helpim ol dispela lain na ol narapela bikpela manmeri tu long ritim na raitim tok pisin. Nogot edukesen bilong ol I pundaun nating. Wantok I wok long givim ol kain kain nius I laik kamap insait long PNG – bilong gavman, bisnis, na ol misin bai ol pipel I save gut long kantri bilong ol.'[27]

This is not the place to give a complete history of *Wantok* – Fr Mihalic will hopefully do that himself, one day – but the Tok Pisin newspaper that began life at the

'Wantok' newspaper was supported by WACC as a 'strategic periodical' in the 1980s. This unusual picture shows a local celebration including a boat sailing under the Wantok logo.

Wirui mission in 1970 serves to illustrate two important points. Firstly it shows the correctness of adopting Tok Pisin as a lotu language and it shows that Tok Pisin has developed as a lingua franca in a way that English never could. It also showed that the question of lotu languages was utterly redundant. The extent to which Tok Pisin had become a lingua franca and the way in which had begun to play a role as a unifying agent was exemplified when journalist Kumalau Tawali quoted Professor Lynch at UPNG as saying that because the government and media did not use Tok Pisin they were failing to keep people informed and only informed people truly participate in development. 'The result is inevitable: We make little progress as a nation. It's as important as that.'[28]

Today Tok Pisin is the national lingua franca of Papua New Guinea. It is still changing: Although creolised in Port Moresby, it is still in a state of flux elsewhere, but it would be hard to argue with the sentiment that 'without it, there would be no unity in this land.'[29] This is not to say that Tok Ples itself is redundant. The Australian administration eventually allowed some government controlled Tok Ples village schools and after independence the PNG government adopted a policy of allowing Tok Ples to be used as the initial language of education. If the role of Tok Ples in uniting a lotu had passed, they remain powerful signifiers of group identity, as witnessed by the survival of Kuanua on the Gazelle Peninsula.[30] The loss of Tok Ples as lotu languages should not be mourned.

The real issue is whether or not the primary role of language in a developing country is to divide or unify it. Languages can be reclaimed, national unity cannot.

This is a revised version of a paper presented at the Society of Oceanists' conference, Leiden University, the Netherlands, in June 1999. As with any paper about the media, languages or the Pacific, it is necessarily a work in progress.

Glossary

- Tok Pisin – The lingua franca of Papua New Guinea. Closely allied with Bislama (Vanuatu) and Solomon Islands Pidgin.
- Tok Ples – Literally 'the talk of the place.' With its 1000 or so languages, language populations can range from 2000 to 200,000, so a Tok Ples might be confined to one village or valley. Conversely, it used as a trading language it might be understood more widely.
- Tok Lotu – I have used this term to mean a local language given a special status by a mission as the language of evangelisation and primary communication within the mission community. The Tok Lotu became the language by which adherents of a mission were identified, particularly if it was not their own Tok Ples.
- Lotu – A Polynesian word used to mean church, mission or Gospel as required.

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1 Not all of the effects of the educational changes that followed were good. One result was a form of educational apartheid in PNG, with European Chinese and some mixed race children being educated in Primary 'A' schools while indigenous children were separated into Primary 'T' schools.
2 G.Souter, New Guinea: The Last Unknown, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1974. p247
3 L.Cass, 'PNG Changes in School Languages Postwar,' MS, May 1999.
4 Les Johnson, the Director of Education in PNG, was opposed to the system of imposing a Tok Ples from one area onto another, precisely the method used by the Lutherans to evangelise with Graged, Kate and Jabem and, to a lesser extent, by the Catholic and Methodist missionaries who spread Kuanua to New Ireland. H.Nelson, Taim Bilong Masta, Australian Broadcasting Commission Sydney, 1982. p153
5 There may be sound reasons for starting primary school with Tok Ples education as now happens in some places. There has been some argument that bilingual students do better and that language skills acquired in one language are transferred to another. Litteral argues strenuously in a series of papers for the virtues of Tok Ples schools, but Turner, reports that the re-introduction of Tok Ples school in some regions has been met with suspicion by some communities which feel that they are receiving a second rate education. M.Turner, Papua New Guinea: The Challenge of Independence, Penguin, Melbourne, 1990, p81. See also R.Litteral, 'Language Development in Papua New Guinea,' SIL Electronic Working Papers 1999-002, February 1999 and 'Four Decades of Language Policy in Papua New Guinea: the move towards the vernacular', SIL Electronic Working Papers 1999-001, February 1999, both at http://www.sil.org/silewp.
6 H.Hage, 'Languages and Schools,' in Wagner and Reiner (eds) The Lutheran Church in Papua New Guinea: The first Hundred Years, Lutheran Publishing House, Adelaide, 1986, p417. There is evidence of a desire by the local people for government schools and attempts by some missionaries – both Protestant and

Catholic – to thwart these wishes. My father, a senior education officer with long experience in PNG, recalled incidents involving French priests and a senior Anglican clergyman who tried to stop people in what is now Oro Province asking for government schools in the 1950s.

7 It was also seen as a threat to attempts to introduce a 'proper' European language. Ralph quotes an unnamed missionary blaming the failure of the German administration's language policy on 'this miserable pidgin English.' C.Ralph, 'Some notes on education in German New Guinea 1884-1914' in Papua New Guinea Journal of Education, July 1965, p77.

8 Neville Threlfall, One Hundred Years in the Islands, Toksave Buk, rabaul, 1985, p140

9 ibid, p166

10 op cit p184

11 op cit p192

12 op cit p215

13 op cit p224

14 H.Hage in Wagner and Reiner (eds) pp413-414.

15 H.Hage, List of Duplicated materials, MS, 1969, UPNG Library/Micheal Somare collection.

16 H.Hage in Wagner and Reiner (eds) p414

17 Confusingly, the Micheal Somare collection holds a copy of a newsletter for New Zealand missionaries, which is also called Wantok and which also appeared about the time Fr Mihalic's newspaper first appeared.

18 Fr Kirschbaum was in charge of the language commission. Fr Paul Steffen, letter to author, Banz, PNG, 24/11/92

19 The date of publication is the subject of debate. Steffen says it came out from 1935-41, Tschauder remembers seeing a Tok Pisin newspaper of some kind when he went there in 1927. Fr John Tschauder, SVD, Interview Madang 3/12/92

20 Bishop Leo Arkfeld interview Wirui mission, Wewak, PNG 29/4/92

21 Fr Ernst Montag '31 Years A Missionary' SVD archives Mt Hagen p37. Kundiawa 1989.

22 Note, for instance, the spelling in the November 1967 edition of Katolik Nius, produced by the MSCs at Vunapope: 'Vonem naem bilong yu?' rather than the more standard 'Wanem naim bilong yu?'

23 Fr Frank Mihalic The Jacaranda Dictionary and Grammar of Melanesian Pidgin Brisbane 1971. Preface to first edition pix)

24 Mihalic pxv preface to second edition

25 'Current Notes' in Papua New Guinea Jounal of Education, V:5, October 1968.

26 C.Zinkel, 'Pidgin schools in the Highlands,' in Papua New Guinea Journal of Education, VII:2, June 1971.

27 Mihalic, 'Wantok kamap 100 taim,' in Wantok, 18/9/74.

28 Kumalau Tawali on Stap na Ting Ting, broadcast on the National Broadcasting Corporation on June 10, 1979.

29 Nobody ever seems to agree on quite how many languages there are in PNG. Most people seem to pick a number somewhere between 750 and 1000. This remarkably prescient quote was made by Keith Willey 35 years ago. K.Willey, Assignment New Guinea, The Jacaranda Press, Brisbane, 1965. p89

30 However, when the church newspaper A Nilai Ra Davot – the second oldest in the country – was revived in 1993, the then Acting Bishop of the Uniting Church, the Reverend Esau Teko said that it could no longer be a purely Kuanua publication because of the demand for Tok Pisin from migrant workers and public servants from other parts of the country.

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IN THE EVENT...

Conference on 'Media, religion and culture'

'The religious sphere and the media sphere are coming together in ways we have yet to realise or understand,' stated Stewart Hoover setting the scene for the third in a series of international conferences on 'Media, Religion and Culture'. It took place at the University of Edinburgh, 20-23 July 1999, and was attended by some 150 academics and practitioners.

The aim of the conference was to build on discussions that began in Uppsala, Sweden (1993) and Boulder, USA (1996), investigating the evolving relationship between the media and different religious and cultural contexts. Stewart Hoover tackled 'The converging worlds of religion and media'. In response, Albert van den Heuvel (WACC President) called for 'a new alliance of prophetic voices from both camps – religion and the media.'

Participants attended a mix of plenary and group sessions in which they heard presentations and counter-opinions and were able to raise questions and issues for further debate. In 'Global billboards, religions and human rights', Cees J. Hamelink – Professor of Communications at the University of Amsterdam, Netherlands, and a speaker at WACC's Congress '95 – attacked the insidious spread of international marketing, contrasting it with the lack of implementation of basic human rights in many countries.

Hamid Mowlana, Professor of International Relations at the American University, Washington DC, guided listeners through the intricacies of classical Islamic beliefs in 'Media, Islam and culture'. His views were contested, in part, by Mona Siddiqui, lecturer in Arabic and Islamic studies and founding director of the Centre for the Study of Islam at the University of Glasgow, Scotland.

The WACC-sponsored panel at the conference gather for a photo-call. Left to right: Georgekutty A. L. (India), Arnis Redovics (Latvia), Gaye Ortiz (United Kingdom), Jolyon Mitchell (UK, conference organiser), Alyda Faber (Canada), and Carlos A. Valle (Argentina). Photo: Philip Lee.

A change of venue for the fourth plenary took participants to the recently opened New Museum of Scotland. Described as 'the finest Scottish building of the 20th century', it presents the history of Scotland, its land, people and their achievements. Housing more than 10,000 of the nation's most valued artefacts, the displays follow a chronological journey from Scotland's geological formation and earliest people down to the 21st century. It goes some way towards proving Samuel Johnson's observation that 'Much may be made of a Scotchman, if he be caught young.'

Using a computer-linked display, Anne Foerst, director of the 'God and Computer Project' at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, USA, explored 'Myth and ritual in cyberspace'. Bearing degrees in computer science and theology, she outlined how the study of artificial intelligence and robotics raises exciting and profound moral questions. A more traditional point of view was expressed by Gregor Goethals, former Professor of Art History at the Rhode Island School of Design, USA, and well-known author of *The Electronic Golden Calf: Images*

The media machine's intrinsic nature always compromises, and sometimes absolutely corrupts, its search for truth and its interpretation of events.

But it is difficult for it to acknowledge these intrinsic distortions, because, as Marx accurately diagnosed, power is always blind to its own partiality and is expert at manufacturing theories to legitimate its own position. The tendency of all power structures to this kind self-delusion means that the challenge to the abuse of power usually has to come from outside the system, and rarely comes from within it.

A good example of the delusive blindness of power is provided by the debate on the ordination of women in my own church. When we were debating whether to ordain women, the thing that frustrated us most in our discussions with those who opposed it was not that the men in charge said honestly that they did not want to share power with women, or that they liked all the male language about God in the Bible, because it confirmed their own sense of the metaphysical superiority of the male urinary tract – there would have been a certain kind of honesty in that, and the laughter it provoked might itself have been cleansing and transforming. But that's not what they said. They said, 'We ourselves have no prejudices against women; indeed, if it were up to us, we would alter things to accommodate their obvious frustrations; unfortunately, God has different ideas. He has fixed these fundamental gender distinctions for ever, and who are we to fight against God?'

Marx would have slapped his thigh with delight at that claim, because it is a perfect illustration of his thesis that people in power always find theoretical ways of justifying their self-interest. The media is a power centre, and it provides similar self-justificatory legitimations of its role, usually by invoking important values, such as the freedom of the press and the need to challenge the abuses of other power centres, such as government.

We should neither despair nor be surprised by any of this. It is the way all human systems work. What we need to keep in place is the important principle of oppositional criticism. All power should, by definition, have organised against it structures of challenge and opposition. The difficulty about this, where the media is concerned, is that we need to co-opt the media in the task of invigilating the media. Inevitably, therefore, we get involved in a kind of circularity, whichever way we turn. The press likes to police itself – all power centres like that arrangement. I am simply wondering out loud whether that can be real policing. Each time there is a particularly gross abuse of the power of the press in this country there is a call for some kind of legislative response. I am not quite sure how that could be framed, but it has to be one of the great moral issues of our time, and it is surely a worthy subject for a conference such as this to take a view on.

From 'The nature of truth in a media saturated context', an address given by the Rt. Revd. Richard Holloway, Episcopal Bishop of Edinburgh, at the third international conference on 'Media, Religion and Culture', Edinburgh, Scotland, 20-23 July 1999.

and the Making of Meaning.

WACC sponsored the fifth plenary 'From revelation to reconciliation' introduced by Carlos A. Valle, WACC General Secretary. Based on Mike Leigh's award-winning film *Secrets & Lies*, three presenters looked at how the discovery of long-hidden secrets in a British family changed their attitudes towards one another. This coming-to-terms with the past offered a starting point for future relationships.

George Kutty Luckose, long-time editor of *Deep Focus* film quarterly, Bangalore, India, identified elements of 'the history of forced dislocations that created a global African and Asian diaspora.' Arnis Redovics, theologian from Riga, Latvia, contrasted *Secrets & Lies* with *The Nest,* directed by Aivars Freimanis (Latvia, 1995). This film shows the homecoming of an emigrant who barely escaped from the Germans during the Second World War. Struck by remorse, his former lover commits suicide because it was she who betrayed him and his comrades to the Germans. Redovics observed that 'the past does change. In the same way that the past changes the future, so the present changes the past.'

Finally, Alyda Faber, researcher and lecturer in the Faculty of Religious Studies at McGill University, Canada, examined dominant trends in current understandings of reconciliation in Christian theology. Illustrated by *Secrets & Lies*, she showed that 'acts of reconciliation – of listening to another person's pain, of facing reality in some way, of compassion for recalcitrant human limitations – take place in a context of enduring habits of estrangement and human desires for communion.'

Plenary 6 witnessed a sparring contest between the media, in the left-hand corner, and Richard Holloway, Episcopal Bishop of Edinburgh, and Wesley Carr, Dean of Westminster in the right-hand corner. 'The nature of truth in a media saturated context' tackled the trend towards 'infotainment' and the media's propensity for shallowness. Bishop Holloway, a writer and broadcaster currently developing a series for BBC 2, is regularly attacked in the press for his outspoken views on politics and society. The Dean of Westminster was responsible for organising the funeral service of Diana, Princess of Wales, and was recently in the news for dismissing the Abbey's organist.

Jeremy Begbie, Vice-Principal of Ridley Hall, Cambridge, and director of the research project 'Theology through the arts', performed rather than presented plenary 7. Called 'Music, media and God' it surveyed different understandings of the role of music in society. Using recordings and illustrating many arguments at the piano, he called on media practitioners and academics to pay greater attention to music as an essential dimension of culture.

The last plenary session of the conference was titled 'Back to the future: Media, religion, culture and faith communities'. Presented by Peter Horsfield of the Uniting Church in Australia, it took a close look at the ongoing process of transition and restructuring

Roxanne (Claire Rushbrook) and Cynthia (Brenda Blethyn) in Mike Leigh's Secrets & Lies. Film Four Distribution.

of mainline religious institutions. Pointing to 'the re-institutionalisation of religious faith within the institutions of commercial mass media', he called for 'the reformation of vital religious communities' and 'the recovery of faith stories as oral events'.

In conclusion, Stewart Hoover announced that a new journal of 'Media, Religion and Culture' is being negotiated with Routledge. The first issues will contain some of the papers presented during the week. In addition, a fourth conference is being planned for Los Angeles in 2002.

Report by Philip Lee.

Second congress of Asian theologians

The theme of this congress was 'Asian Theology in a Changing Asia: Towards an Asian Theological Agenda Towards the 21st Century'. More than 90 theologians from Asia took part, including more than 20 from South Korea who had taken part in an earlier Minjung-Dalit dialogue that was held in Chennai, the city formerly known as Madras.

The Congress dealt with new theologies from the perspectives of three sub-themes: economics, spirituality and solidarity. The key-note speaker on the first sub-theme was Prof. Leonor Magtolis Briones, who currently holds the post of Treasurer of the Philippines. Her analysis of the Asian economic scenario was very incisive. That it was heavily dependent on statistics culled rather liberally from the UNDP 1999 report did not take anything away from the presentation. She concluded her paper with a series of forthright suggestions – that the church in Asia explore alternatives to globalisation by using the subversive potential of the Net and more interestingly that theologians explore 'process theology' which contends that God evolves along with human beings.

This is not something new for theologians involved in the science-faith encounter have been advocating new ways of apprehending and understanding God in a world structured by advances in science and technology. But very few Asian theologians have seriously considered the challenges posed by the following comment: 'If God doesn't change, we are in danger of losing God. There is a shift to the idea of God as a process evolving with us. If you believe in an eternal, unchanging God, you'll be in trouble.' I guess that the Bishop of Edinburgh will be a handy ally for Asian theologians as they explore this area!

It was announced that the Templeton Foundation had given Korean theologians US$12 million to explore this encounter and I did see them enlisting support for the cause from other theologians present. Anne Pattel Gray, who is currently visiting professor at the United Theological College, Bangalore, dealt with the second sub-theme and Hyondok Choe from South Korea with the third sub-theme.

These themes were explored further in inter-disciplinary workshops. Communication was one of nine areas explored that included church history, systematics, feminist theology, etc. The paper that I presented was entitled 'Globalisation and Christian Communications: Some Implications for the Church in Asia'.

I came away with the feeling that, in spite of real breakthroughs and advances in Minjung and Feminist theologies for example, many of these theologians are captive to the agendas set by their theoretical frameworks, particularly that set by Post-Modern and Post-Colonial theories. Hyondok Choe, for example, in her concluding remarks referred to the cultural guerrilla wars in South Korea as leading to new forms of solidarity. These wars are self-contained local acts of rebellion and instances of solidarity – that are interesting and valid in their own right, but lacking in any larger understanding of solidarity beyond the confines of the local and the immediate. But this seems to be the emerging understanding of solidarity – specific, limited, narrow. There are no larger points of reference – for all these have been discredited by the new theories.

In a context characterised by the decentring of grand narratives, I was surprised by the presence of God! To me the Congress was too economic centred in its analysis and I was among very few people who pushed theologians to take issues related to culture and communication seriously. It reminded me of the old Marxist debates where the economic base was the main focus of analyses at the expense of the superstructures, i.e. culture, politics, etc. Communications is unfortunately a low priority issue and subject among Asian theologians. The status quo remains. And I think that it is going to be a long while before Asian theologians discover the presence of God in the context of the everyday and the material.

The most moving of the evening presentations was undoubtedly the one presented by members belonging to and working with the Narmada Bachoa Andolan(Save the Narmada Valley) – a project supported by the World Bank that will involve the making of hundreds of dams on the Narmada River in North/Central India. It has already led to the submergence of many 'tribal' villages. The interesting thing about this movement is the involvement, commitment and support given by many thousands of people in India from all walks of life, the latest being the Booker prize winner Arundhati Roy. It is an on-going struggle whose success or failure will determine the future of development in India.

Report by Pradip N. Thomas

ON THE SCREEN...

Montreal film festival 1999

Carlos Saura with members of the Ecumenical Jury.

At the 23rd Montreal World Film Festival (27 August to 6 September 1999) the cinema of 68 countries was represented and the 19 films that competed for the official prize were from 16 countries. For this reason the Festival deserves to be called *World* Film Festival. It offered, in several sections, the opportunity of appreciating some of the films that reflects current concerns and realities: World Greats, World Cinema: Reflections of our time and Cinema of Tomorrow: New trends. Special attention was paid to Latin America and Irish cinema along with a panorama of Canadian filmography. There was also room for new blood in the section 'Student Film & Video Festival'.

The Festival created a particular atmosphere in the city of Montreal. People were queuing at the various cinemas to watch films from countries and cultures that generally are not part of the regular offering of distributors and local theatres.

In 1979 an Ecumenical Jury was established for this Festival. Montreal's Ecumenical Jury is the only one in North America. Its task is to grant an Ecumenical Prize to a film among the feature films in the Official Competition. The Jury is appointed by OCIC and Interfilm/WACC. These organisations understand that 'the Ecumenical Prize aims at promoting movies that distinguish themselves not only by artistic merit, but also by their exploration of the ethical, social and spiritual values that make life human.' The members of the 1999 Ecumenical Jury were: Janet Lee Clark (Canada), Florence Desmazures (France), Hilly G. Hicks (USA), R. Ferdinand Poswick (Belgium), Carlos A. Valle (Argentina) and Bertrand Oullet (Canada) – president of the Jury.

The Ecumenical Jury unanimously awarded its prize to the film *Goya en Burdeos* (Goya in Bordeaux) because: 'This genuine work of art is a vibrant testimony to the importance of art, inner life and memory as forces for social evolutions. The borders between memory and imagination, art and reality, past and present dissolve into a woven tapestry, wherein the hard realities from the past inspire the always relevant struggle for freedom.'

Saura, perhaps Spain's best-known director was born in 1932. His first films reflect the search for a new path and life out of the oppressiveness of Franco's regime. Films like his first *Los Golfos* (1965) followed by *The Hunt* (1965) and *Anna and the Wolves* (1972) are examples of a rich and challenging creativity that has found a peak in his latest film. Saura has said: 'I have tried to show what Goya was like in his last years, exiled in Bordeaux – what were his passions, his loves and his hatred, his hallucinations, his dreams, his demons. All in a world where the imaginary exists side by side with the mundane.'

There were at least two other films dealing with the experience of being exiled that reflect similar situations. *Until We Meet* by Cho-Moon-Jin from Korea is the story of a North Korean soldier who defects from the army and crosses the border to the South. Unfortunately he steps on a land mine. He survives but is stricken with amnesia. Three men who escaped from North Korea many years ago were identified as possible fathers of the soldier. All the memories of the past, the sense of betrayal and guilt, and the need to be forgiven and at the same time to forget are now inescapable. It is a way of saying that our past cannot be put aside and ignored. One day it will become present in our personal and social lives.

Which Side Eden by Vojtech Jasny from Czech Republic is the story of a professor who has found his home in the US and plans to return to visit his old town in Moravia. But after the war everything has changed. He too has changed. Unfortunately the film spends too much time on a tourist trip around New York and the countryside of Moravia, instead of reflecting on the pros and cons of what it means to be an exile who escaped the horrors of war and poverty and found far away a prosperous personal situation.

The richness of childhood's memories; the sense of being considered a foreigner in his own country; the sense of visiting a country that is no longer 'his country'; the paradoxical reality that his new adopted country is not totally his own. In the film all these elements are only insinuated.

There are, at least, two other films that should be mentioned. Both deal with the meaning of duty and responsibility in life in relation to daily work. In both cases long preserved traditions are called into question in the light of new historical times. The first is *Postmen in the Mountains* by Huo Jianqi from China. Jianqi was born in Beijing in 1958 and graduated from the Beijing Film Academy. He made his debut as director in 1995 with *The Winner* followed by *The Singer* in 1996. *Postmen in the Mountains* is the story of a man from a remote village of southern China who for decades has acted as postman delivering the mail in the mountains. Now it's time for his son to take the mailbag. Father and son will go together on the father's last round. Full of symbolism, the film reflects on the need for dialogue among generations, what to preserve and what to change or improve. In this context caring for people and the role of the job as a service is beyond question.

Poppoya by Yasuo Furuhata from Japan is the story of a stationmaster in a small town who never leaves his station, even when his only daughter falls ill and dies. He has a deep sense of loyalty to his work. But in the end he regrets what he has sacrificed. His dilemma is between his beloved daughter and his duty. He opts for the latter. The film was beautifully shot by Daisaku Kimura during a very harsh winter. The vast scenery covered by persistent snow imprints a dramatic tone of solitude and anguish.

The Montreal World Film Festival offered the chance find out that in many parts of the world cinema is in good health and continues to be a valuable instrument for expressing the inner nature of human beings, their sufferings, struggles and dreams. As Robert Bresson, the French filmmaker, reminds us 'Make visible what, without you, might never have been seen.'

Report by Carlos A. Valle

Locarno 1999

The prize of the ecumenical jury at the Locarno film festival went to *La vie ne me fait pas peu*r by Noémie Lvovsky (France, 1999). The film sympathetically portrays the search by four adolescent girls for their place in the world. Torn between joy and sorrow, relationships and loneliness, their friendship gives them mutual support. While recalling her own youth, the director uses the young actresses to create a vivid picture of the difficult time of growing up. (Still above courtesy of Filmcooperative Zürich.)

A special mention went to the film *Barak* by Valerij Ogorodnikov (Russia, 1999). By creating symphonic unity with artistic expression, the director shows that community can overcome hatred and sorrow. The film shows estrangement giving way to mutual understanding and how an authentic picture of a certain period of time becomes a symbol of love which can effectively change difficult circumstances.

The reports of an upsurge in inter-religious conflicts in India – that peaked in December 1998 in the state of Gujarat, and of sporadic violence against religious minorities and missionaries in the Indian states of Orissa, Bihar, Karnataka and Kerala during the first half of 1999, once again brought into sharp relief some of the tensions besetting democracy in India.[1] While Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs have suffered the consequences of planned and random inter-religious, 'communal' violence for years, it is only recently that the Christian minority has become a target of such violence. The following article explores this scenario.

FORUM

Web wars and inter-faith futures in India

Pradip N. Thomas

According to some newspaper reports, particularly the vernacular press in the Hindi belt, the issue of 'conversion' was the primary reason for the violence. Other newspapers, especially sections of the moderate English press, were of the opinion that the violence was premeditated, and orchestrated by the Hindu nationalist network, collectively known as the Sangh Parivar, with the tacit encouragement of one of its members, the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Members of the Sangh Parivar include the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), the Shiv Sena and the Bajrang Dal, among others. The gradual but deliberate ascendance of the RSS network, from relative obscurity in the 1920s, and its marginalisation after an ex-member, Nathuram Godse, was found guilty of assassinating Mahatma Gandhi in 1948, to become the power behind the throne recently, is according to some observers, very similar to the rise of National Socialism in Germany in the 1930s.[2] While there are differences, the continuities between these two types of nationalisms run deep, and RSS stalwarts like M. S. Golwalkar and K. B. Hedgewar, and in particular the Shiv Sena leader Bal Thackeray, have sometimes commended Hitler and the ideology of Nazism.

The politics of religious nationalism in India has been fuelled by a variety of fears and interests – imagined, manufactured, resurrected, real – that have coalesced to form part of the national imaginary of a large section of people belonging to the majority community, i.e. the Hindus. It has also correspondingly affected the worldview of minorities, in particular Muslims and Christians in India today. The dominant 'Hindutva', meaning Hindu Nation version of this story, is made up of many strands supplied by certain groups of people – as for example:

(1) disaffected Hindu priests and mahants,[3] mainly Brahmin, whose ritual, sacral powers have been marginalised in the context of secular India.

(2) Hindu nationalists and their intellectual supporters who are a) keen to restore the physical and spiritual unity, meaning the Hindu ethos, of India through righting the wrongs inflicted by countless Mughal rulers on India in the past; b) united in their efforts to counter the perceived hegemony of socialists and secularists in present-day India in education and opinion making; c) committed to resisting the expansionist zeal of adherents belonging to the Semitic religions in India and their allies abroad; d) united in deploying the symbol of a militant and virile Lord Rama in their efforts to mobilise Hindus against the enemies of the nation within, particularly non-Hindu minorities, and without, the geo-political aspirations of China and Pakistan in particular, along with the threat from the immediate West, the hard-line Taliban in Afghanistan, and in the East, the Sino-Myanmarese axis; and e) wedded to the project of institutionalising and centralising an all India version of Hinduism.

(3) Hindu traders who have had to compete with their Muslim counterparts in the retail of brassware, handicrafts, textiles, and other goods.

(4) The diaspora Hindu community from the USA, Europe and elsewhere and their many fears and grievances against exclusionary policies in their adopted country, and who have articulated trans-national longings and pan-Hindu desires via movements such as the World Council of Hindus.

(5) High caste Hindus who are against the practice of positive discrimination in favour of the 'scheduled castes' and 'Dalits' in government, educational institutions and employment in general, perceived pandering to minority interests, and who blame Christian missions and NGOs for the empowerment of the lower castes and indigenous peoples.

(6) The many Hindus living in North India, the victims of the Partition, who have not reconciled themselves to memories of the loss of family, friends and property during that violent episode in Indian history.

These strands, along with others, form a complex web of longings, fears, aspirations and counter-aspirations that has been over-simplified for popular consumption by nationalist Hindu politicians. Popular sound-bites – that India is a Hindu nation, that Indian identity is co-terminous with Hindu identity, that minorities must recognise the primacy of the Hindu state or face being alienated – are some of the popular slogans that have extensive legitimacy, particularly in the Hindi-Hindu heartland. In a context characterised by widespread economic and political insecurities, the exploitation of such primary fears through the naming of enemies, the emphasis on identity and the framing of exclusive Hindutva futures, guarantees certainty and hope to some sections of society at the expense of others.

The key beneficiary of this project has undoubtedly been the BJP-led central government. It has assiduously built upon the failures of previous governments in the arena of minority politics, in particular the Congress, created alliances with other nationalist groups and organisations, manipulated popular religious sentiments based on an exclusive version of identity-speak and exploited religious symbolism to great effect through spectacles like the *Rath Yatra,*[4] televised mythologies and a variety of information/communication channels. In fact, the BJP is, by a long shot, the first thoroughly modern political party in India. Its image was assiduously created and promoted by the media. It employed a wide array of spin-doctors and enjoyed extensive electronic coverage.

Against the grain: Inter-faith relationships in India

Such a selective manufacture of reality inevitably fails to account for the many lived correspondences between majorities and minorities, even in the heart of the Hindi belt, where Muslims and Hindus continue to live by side in the most unlikely places. Nandy et. al. (1997:2-3) in a study of the Ramjanmabhumi Movement that led to the destruction of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya nearly a decade ago allude to lived realities in this city.[5] They make the point: 'Even today, despite the bitterness of the last eight years, the flowers offered for worship in the Ayodhya temples are almost all grown by Muslims. The Muslims still weave the garlands used in the temple and produce everything necessary for dressing the icons preparatory to worship.' They say: 'Until some years ago, the making of the crowns of the gods was the near monopoly of Muslim master craftsmen such as Rahmat Sonar and Nannu Sonar; the thrones for the gods are even today made by the likes of Balam Mistri, a highly respected Muslim carpenter.' Manuel (1996:122) writing of the development of Hindustani music in North India, notes its emergence in creative collaborations between Hindu and Muslim artists and patrons in colonial India.[6] Even in South India, where the classical tradition of Carnatic music is dominated by the Brahmins, the discerning ear can still hear the 'Other' as one of 'Us' – like the late Sheik Moula Sahib's nagaswaram-based rendition of the song, *Mahaganapathim* (Venkatasubramaniam:1998).[7]

A great many Christians too have contributed to an inclusive vision of India – a vision communicated through a variety of service institutions – notably in education and medical establishments. But by far the most significant witness to inter-faith life in India is what one may term the 'daily dialogue of life' which characterises living in many parts of India. These countless instances of intricate inter-community weavings, both formal and informal, are rarely if ever highlighted by the media. On the contrary, local media in the Hindi belt, in particular Hindi newspapers such as *Aaj* and *Dainik Jagran* have on innumerable occasions been accused of misinforming the public, misinterpreting events, adding a communal twist to reporting, and generally supporting the cause of Hindutva.[8]

Counter fundamentalism

It is tempting to place the entire blame for the breakdown of inter-faith relationships on the Sangh Parivar, but that would be far from the truth. Their role in the many acts of violence against minorities and the complicity of BJP-run state governments and the tacit support given by the central government to the initiators of violence cannot be denied. The prevarication shown by the BJP government and its unwillingness to condemn such violence, especially that carried out by members belonging to the Sangh arivar, have been interpreted as an example of their inherent anti-minoritism.[9]

However, religious conflict in India has also been fuelled by groups from within minority religions, by Muslims and by people belonging to the Christian community who have, for instance, in their zeal to convert all 'non'-Christians – in particular indigenous tribes and Hindus – antagonised many by their insensitivity, narrow-mindedness and disrespect for local belief systems and cultures. It can be argued that fundamentalist evangelical Christian groups, by their actions, have often contributed to undermine the development, relief, dialogue and social justice work carried out by mainstream Christian groups in India, such as the Catholics, mainline Protestants and the Orthodox over many years. Additionally, revival movements within the mainstream churches, along with positions taken by hard-line evangelical Christian communities, have contributed to a rise in inter-faith tensions. Mainstream churches, concerned over the exodus of their flock to evangelical churches, have increasingly begun to accept multi-church attendance and seem unwilling to antagonise members who entertain narrow views on inter-faith matters.

There is also a widely held feeling among the majority community that minorities have benefited from their position as a convenient vote bank for political parties, the Congress in particular, in exchange for the protection of their religious rights and institutions from state interference.[10] This stands in marked contrast to the situation of the majority community, whose religious institutions, such as temples, fall under the purview of state-run boards and who therefore have had to contend with occasional state interference. Such an example of perceived bias in favour of minorities has become a matter of controversy. Minorities tend to invoke the Constitution as the basis for their right to practise religious freedom, but as contemporary events in Indonesia have borne out, the text of the *Pancasila* is not necessarily upheld by its implementation in real life[11] – an implementation rendered difficult by the micro-politics of innumerable identity negotiations which involve the state, religious organisations, personalities and ordinary people.

In other words, the negotiations of daily life are, despite constitutional guarantees, necessarily fragile – a fact that is made even more complex in pluralist societies. It would seem that unless the concept of a multi-faith society becomes institutionalised as a practical norm, plural societies like India are bound to remain in thrall to ominant 'interpretive' communities and to their visions and versions of religious futures.

The South Asia correspondent for *Le Figaro,* François Gautier, in an article that appeared in *The Hindustan Times,* reprinted in *Himal* (March 1999) has criticised the warped, non-objective, pro-Christian bias shown by many reporters in their coverage of communal conflicts, in contrast to their reticence to highlight the plight of Hindu victims of such violence, as an example of their captivity to colonial frames of mind – a view that must have been welcomed by the then beleaguered government.[12] The article also refers to 'the aggressive methods of the Pentecost and Seventh Day Adventist missionaries' and 'their muscular ways of converting' as contributing factors in the rise of inter-faith tension in parts of North India, a view also echoed by William Dalrymple (March 20,1999) in *The Guardian Weekend.*[13]

Dalrymple refers to the new-wave Pentecostalist movements spreading through India, their connections with a variety of fundamentalist Christian missions located in the Bible belt in the USA and to their overtly anti-Hindu websites. While Gautier's inference that journalists in India are captive to colonial frames of mind is misplaced, given that journalists in India are recognised for their independent reporting standards – a tradition that stands vindicated in contrast with the coverage by the Western press of the war in the Balkans – his comments on insensitive Christian evangelism in India remain a fair critique.

Such robustly critical and provocative pieces of journalism stand in marked contrast to communiqués from the ecumenical Christian community in India, who have in general opted for a defensive, rather than self-critical position on the tensions in Gujarat and elsewhere.[14] While it is necessary to condemn violence against any given community, it is, as far as I can see, equally important that the ecumenical community responds by opening up spaces for reconciliation and dialogue on the one hand, while simultaneously using such opportunities on the other hand, to rein in the zealots in the Christian fold. I would argue that the articulation of a merely generalist response will, given the present level of ignorance on religious issues, precipitate a general backlash against all Christians in India, who are by no means united in their understandings of mission, Christian identity and purpose in a pluralist context. Lest this be interpreted as a strategy to 'save ones own skin', I expect the response from the church in India to be articulated from within a conscious conviction of Christian 'rights and responsibilities leading to what one might term a covenantal approach to reconciliation.

There are, of course, obvious benefits to be gained by a movement for religious rights and responsibilities in a country like India. In addition, such responses would prepare mainstream churches to deal with potential challenges to inter-faith relationships in India such as that posed by global religious satellite broadcasting that is presently controlled primarily by Christian fundamentalist-evangelist interests. The Rupert Murdoch-owned News Corporation's channel International Family Entertainment, Inc., which until very recently was part of the US tele-evangelist Pat Robertson's 700 Club, can without too many technical difficulties be offered for general availability in South Asia through DTH satellite broadcasts. In the event that it does become available, will it further erode inter-faith relationships in India? Local satellite channels such as Raj TV and Vijay TV already offer evangelical fare and some non-Indian satellite-based evangelical content is already available to viewers in India. Will the ecumenical community in India be in a position to take a stand on issues that arise from much of this sort of broadcasting or will they back-off from confronting the indigenous Christian Right whose allies in the USA have, for instance, used broadcasting as a key weapon in their strategy for evangelisation? It is clear that the air-waves are being used by religious communities for narrow ends in India – the satellite channels Maharishi Veda and Muslim TV Ahmediya are examples of this. In this light it would be interesting to see the outcome of the joint Catholic-Protestant Christian satellite service that is being negotiated today in India.

While fear is a legitimate human response to the prospect of an uncertain future, the cultivation of a nation-wide fear psychosis, restricts self-criticism, reinforces escapist withdrawal which, in turn, will preclude possibilities for a meaningful search for long-term solutions.

The following section will address issues related to the new media and the politics of fundamentalism and revivalism in India. It will, in particular, deal with the use of the new media by the Christian right in India, who, for all practical purposes, are an extension of their counterparts in the USA, and their use by the Hindu right. It will point to the ways in which this 'transcendent' agenda is pursued through an aggressive fronting of web-sites, maintained by rival supporters who are generally located outside the sub-continent, and will conclude with a section on appropriate information policies for a pluralist society.

Web wars

Instant communication has its uses and abuses. I would argue that in the cyber era, the web-site has become an extended space for inter-faith net wars fought by, among others, the religious right, for the minds and souls of people. The Internet is an unregulated domain used by all manner of people and communities in their pursuit of inter-activity, identity, and association. However, its specific architectures also place limits on interactivity. While Usenet groups on the Net are based on the freedom of open access, the World Wide Web is less participatory, in the sense that those who access any given web-site do not generally have the freedom to alter a web page or determine its contents. That function is determined by web maintainers or managers.

Web pages created by organisations and associations, regardless of their ilk, attempt to present as complete a rendering of a project, association or worldview as possible, enhanced by text, images, graphics and links. While hypertext functions give users browsing, linkage and route options to any information on the world wide web, they do not correspondingly give opportunities for users directly to manipulate web texts, except in a limited, functional sense, for web-site assessment purposes and for transactions of an administrative kind.

In other words, organisational web-sites are identity

statements and affirmations and, in this sense, are grounded, less transient and ephemeral than other features of the Internet. Mitra and Cohen (1999:199) refer to what they term the unique characteristics of the web text ' . . . its inherent intertextuality, its lack of centre, its volume, its multimedianess, its international scope, its impermanence, and the resulting altered sense of authorship'.[15] However, it would seem that its uniqueness lies not so much in its technological features per se, but in the many ways in which these features are used by people to appropriate and interact with web texts for particular ends.

Religious web-sites communicate global, transnational identities that signify particular, exclusive intent. Some of these sites afford opportunities to understand the 'other' and to network. But since Internet traffic is not determined by its content and is not policed except through self-regulation, it also provides limitless space for all manner of sites, including those fronted by organisations which have no desire to understand the 'other', and want only to impose their own worldview.[16] The promise of limitless space accompanied by a widely subscribed-to freedom of access ethic has led to the world wide web hosting sites that play an active role in national and transnational, virtual inter-religious information wars, that complement real inter-religious strife in real time that can and do occasionally result in serious human consequences.

Information wars fought between rival newsgroups on the Internet were the precursors of present day web wars.[17] Web wars merely extend this phenomenon, by reinforcing positions, although from within a protective space, less vulnerable to 'flaming' and 'cross-postings'. Granted that net access is denied to the majority of people in India, such wars can, even if only tangentially, heighten insecurities among diasporic Indian communities, provide ammunition to ultra-nationalist politicians, lead to tensions between faiths and contribute to the breakdown of an already fragile consensus.

<<w. w. w.Mission.India>>

Even a cursory monitoring of religion-based web-sites, in this case with the Yahoo search engine, yielded 153 sites on the subject of Mission.[18] This listserve included all manner of mainly Christian missions from the mainstream Protestant, Catholic and Evangelical churches. However sites belonging to evangelical organisations predominate. Most of these organisations originate from the USA, subscribe to the Lausanne Covenant on World Evangelisation, and are involved in mission work in different parts of the world, including India. India is located in what they refer to as the '10/40 Window', meaning 'the unevangelised and unreached belt between 10 and 40 degrees north of the equator, from West Africa to East Asia'.[19] The year 2000 is obviously significant for many of these groups and organisations such as AD2000 and their Joshua Project 2000 have targeted 1700 communities globally for church-planting efforts, including 200 in North India. The North Indian Hindi-belt is also the primary location for contemporary forms of Hindu nationalist resurgence.

One of the striking features of these web-sites is the language and imagery used. Like Joshua, who sent spies to survey the land the Israelites were to inhabit, God is helping to 'spy out the land' that we (meaning Christians) 'might go in and claim both it and its inhabitants for Him'.[20] The Sam P. Chelladurai Outreach Mission web page describes India as 'a land of opportunity', 'a free country' that allows 'the right to preach and propagate the Gospel', a country where one 'can preach, make disciples, baptize and add people to the church'.[21] Dr Roger Houtsma's World Outreach Ministries web site refers to his work in Vyara and Songadh, cities in North Western Gujarat, the state which incidentally experienced a number of religious conflicts in late 1998 – 'India is experiencing the greatest harvest in its history. Now is the time that we must reap'.[22]

The Accelerating International Mission Strategies (AIMS) home page[23] refers to the Caleb Declaration[24] and people signing it becoming 'part of a movement of Christians who are zealous for God's glory and for seeing His Kingdom advanced and His name proclaimed among all nations!' Their priority 'Gateway Cities' include Jaipur in Rajasthan, Patna in Bihar and Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh. Believers are asked to pray for the sublime . . . 'That the millions of pilgrims visiting the Ganges River . . . find the living water given by Jesus', and the ludicrous . . . 'Worship of rats produces conditions that foster pneumonic plague. Pray that the idolatry underlying this health hazard would be bound.' And then the most zealous prayer of all . . . 'Pray that the strife between Muslims and Hindus would cause disillusionment, leading them to the true Prince of Peace.'[25]

What is perhaps most regrettable in many of these web sites is the disrespect with which they describe Hindus, their Gods, Goddesses and practices along with a near total ignorance of the diverse spiritualities and ways to the Brahman (ultimate reality) that Hinduism signifies. In the AD2000 series sign #4 'Why North India', they describe Varanasi, the seat of Hindu faith, in the following manner. 'Varanasi in the state of Uttar Pradesh is Hinduism's holiest city, with thousands of temples centring on the worship of Shiva, an idol whose symbol is a phallus. Many consider this city the very seat of Satan. Hindus believe that bathing in the Ganges River at Varanasi washes away all sins'. In the same vein it adds that 'A number of Christian workers took up the burden of prayer for this city and in prayer-walks boldly declared before the idols, "you are not a living god".'[26] The same fervour is exhibited in the Gospel for Asia web page that informs the world that 6 million tracts were distributed to Hindu pilgrims at the Kumbh Mela, an important Hindu festival.[27] These are examples of what may be described as zealotry run riot.

The contents of these web-sites reflect the typical narrative structure of fundamentalist churches in the USA – their belief in global 'evangelism, biblical inerrancy, pre-millennialism and separatism' (Ammerman:1998).[28] A striking feature is the call to activist foot-soldiers who have a responsibility not merely to wait for the Kingdom but to usher it in – exemplified by the subtle and not so subtle work carried out by evangelical teams in India. These web sites are also totally in character with the well-funded communication strategies employed by the religious right in the USA that employ a variety of rhetorical devices to commu-

nicate a fusion of interests between the this-worldly and the eschatological. What is evident is a strategic plan for global evangelism that may not in the end amount to much, but the separatist intent of which can be interpreted as a call to arms.

These US-based missions fund a network of national and local organisations in India which are involved in mission work.[29] These include the India Missions Association, the Evangelical Fellowship of India, the North India Harvest Network, the Evangelical Church of India, New Life Assemblies of God and literally hundreds of other institutions. Communication is critical to the work of these missions and a variety of means are employed – from innumerable print ministries such as that undertaken by the Gospel Missions of India, radio ministries through Trans-World Radio, Good News Broadcasting Society, the Far East Broadcasting Association and Gospel for Asia Radio Ministries, Bible translation ministries such as the Indian Institute of Cross Cultural Communication, India Bible Translators, New Life Computers and the Friends Missionary Prayer Band, a variety of seminaries and Bible training schools which in turn churn out hundreds of evangelists and pastors. South Indian Christians, primarily from the states of Kerala and Tamil Nadu, form the bulk of recruits for these missionary organisations, the foot-soldiers for the Cross in North India.

Evangelism and conversion are of course integral to the Christian faith but their meanings vary widely, ranging from the absolutist positions taken by fundamentalists through the centring of the liberating message of the Gospel in the life of the world and to the risky openness of conversion subscribed to by some in the ecumenical movement – the possibility of mutual conversion in a context of dialogue. The WCC Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, in its statement on Mission and Evangelism – Ecumenical Convictions (1997:383), states clearly that 'Life with people of other faiths and ideologies is an encounter of commitments. Witness cannot be a one-way process, but of necessity is two-way: in it Christians become aware of some of the deepest convictions of their neighbours'.[30]

The ex-general secretary of the World Council of Churches, Emilio Castro, writing on evangelism in the *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement* (1991:399) remarks that 'The guidelines for our (Christian) relations with other faiths remind us that it is not just a question of co-existence or pro-existence of the different religious groups. It is also an attitude of dialogue . . . an attitude of respect for the neighbour. Consequently, our testimony to our faith should take place in a context not only of respect but of acceptance of the other'.[31] These are examples of the multiplicity of positions in organised Christianity on issues such as evangelism and conversion – a diversity that is scarcely acknowledged by the media.

The lived exploration of the Hindu-Christian meeting point by Swami Abhishiktananda,[32] Murray Rogers, Bede Griffiths[33] and Jules Monchanin[34] are further illustrations of convictions in mission that are undoubtedly blasphemous as far as most evangelicals are concerned. However the most powerful expressions of dialogue are communicated by the daily clatter within the give and take of life experienced by various communities in India in different locales and contexts. Presumably such unconscious, daily celebrations of difference and solidarity are also grist to the fundamentalist mill.

Such processes of attenuation reviewed above are also evident in the Hindutva ideology, which attempts to reduce the complex diversity of Hindu traditions to a few select, manageable, centralised options.

The presence of such web-sites has not gone unnoticed. In fact the comprehensive and informative link site, Hindu Web Universe, refers to the work and worldview of some of these organisations.[35] Given the money, resource power and media savvy of North American evangelical groups, their presence on the web is only to be expected. They have historically been adept at exploiting the technologies of mass communications for their own ends. The conviction that every new advance in communications technology is a gift from God and should be exploited for the cause of the Kingdom, is also a view that resonates in mainstream Christian circles in India, even though, perhaps fortunately, their involvement has been minimal.

<<w. w. w.Hindu.India>>

In contrast to these web sites, there are very few belonging to groups associated with the Hindutva cause. Sites include those that are maintained by the R.S.S.,[36] the Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh,[37] the BJP,[38] the Hindu Vivek Kendra,[39] and the super link, Hindu Web Universe.[40] What is perhaps the most striking aspect of these web sites is their organisational streamlining, their imputed representativeness of a pan-Hindu identity and the hierarchising of the organisation of an all-India Hinduism – in other words an attempt to provide a certain unity to the diverse practices and ways to God that Hinduism signifies. The BJP site gives information on its history, rationale, organisation, leadership, its politics, its stance on issues and its overall philosophy including statements by some of its key ideologues, including S. Gurumurthy and Arun Shourie. As the site of the ruling political party in India, it does put forward its credentials as a Hindu and pro-minority party. That however stands out as a difficult and problematic juxtaposition. The RSS site gives information on its founders and the Sangh Parivar's work in education, rural development, unionising, the fine arts, appropriate technology, heritage and communications.

The dominant narrative that links many of these web sites is the legitimation of Hindu resurgence, and the need for the updating of the image and status of Hinduism in India from that of 'wimp' to strident and aggressive masculinity, communicated by the war-like image of Lord Rama. The project is one that effaces the received colonialist understanding of Hinduism and establishes in its place a post-colonialist understanding signified by Hindutva, the Hindu nation. It is about righting the wrongs inflicted by traitors, in the past and the present, a cleansing followed by the creation of a golden age of Hindu glory.

The words of the BJP ideologue, Mihir Meghani, exemplify this rhetoric of manifest destiny: 'Hindus are at last free. They control their destiny now and there is no power

that can control them except their own tolerant ethos. India in turn is finally free. Having ignored its history, it has now come face to face with a repressed conscience. The destruction of the structure at Ayodhya was the release of the history that Indians had not fully come to terms with. Thousands of years of anger and shame, so diligently bottled up by these same interests, was released when the first piece of the so-called Babri Masjid was torn down'.[41]

There is no understating the objective of these web sites. It is a fronting of imagined and real futures, towards a space and time in which the Hindus of India and the world will unite in and for the protection of the Hindu heritage. Needless to say, that space and time will, of course, not be to the advantage of people who belong to other religious traditions.

Manufacturing communalism

The reading thus far has been rather cursory. More research needs to be conducted to unravel the links between the new media, exclusivist agendas and communalism in India. An obvious question that can be posed is – So what if there are religious web wars? After all, in a country like India, those who have access to such technologies are in a minority. Such wars do not affect the majority who are moved by other considerations. Furthermore, there is little evidence in favour of a relationship between web content and changes in attitudes or behaviour. One may also argue that web wars merely amplify and feed into a pre-existing situation and that, as such, one cannot even be sure of their impact. It can further be argued that, in a given context, there are contributory non-media factors which are primarily responsible for igniting inter-religious strife. And that such factors feed into and are amplified by the communication of that strife through inter-personal means, mass media and new technologies.

While there are non-media factors that are responsible for inter-religious conflict, it would nevertheless be absurd to claim that these factors on their own are responsible for heightening the level of inter-faith tensions in India. The presence and role of the media in the creation of national public opinion in India have been demonstrated on many an occasion. In fact, the media have played a substantial role in interpreting inter-religious conflict in India. A prime example was the way in which the media in general reported the demolition of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya in 1990. Instead of deflecting the political agenda of the Hindu Right the media gave rise to a great many dubious interpretive inflections on the reasons that led to the fall of the Babri Masjid. Among those that were given prominent media space were the 'spontaneous' nature of the demolition, the release of long bottled-up Hindu righteous anger, making amends for past wrongs, the assertion of Hindu identity and so on – some of which contained partial truths, but were nevertheless communicated without the benefit of any background information.

Many reports failed to comment on the jigsaw of events that preceded the storming of the Masjid – events that point to a premeditated strategy. These ranged from the unwitting influence of the tele-serials the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabaratha* shown on state television in the mid-80s, to the overt support given to religious nationalism on state television and in privately owned media, in particular through cable television, video and audio productions, the press, and the symbolism mediated through national spectacles such as the religious nationalist pilgrimages or *Rath Yatras.*

Aijaz Ahmad (1993:33) has drawn attention to the rise of the Hindu right and the effective manipulation of symbols in their quest for political legitimacy.'[42] . . . The real ingenuity of the RSS was that it adopted at the moment of its own inception and consistently since then, the figure of Ram as the one upon whom all narrative structures converge, so that the later televising of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabaratha* in quick succession created a sense of this mutual continuity, the story of Ram overlapping with heroic narratives of the sacred nation. . . . When Mr. Advani's *rathyatra* got going it was seen as an extension of the epics and no one was bothered by the simultaneity of symbols taken from both.'

<<www. Interfaith.India>>

It is always difficult to project a strategic vision of inter-faith communications in a context characterised by mutual distrust and simmering violence. The Sangh Parivar has the avowed aim to Hinduise India, to de-secularise the constitution and to reinvent institutions and systems, for instance the educational system,[43] in line with its own interpretative spin on the history if India and its futures. Its external aims are no less belligerent, given the recent nuclear misadventures of its political ally, the BJP.[44] While educational reform is necessary (there is a good case to revamp the potted, colonialist version of history presented in primary and secondary school text books) and there is much to be gained by a global ban on nuclear weapons as against the special set of rules for the recognised five nuclear weapon states, the long-term impact of policies adopted for the pursuit of narrow, exclusivist goals and short-term electoral politics is bound to keep internal and external tensions alive. The convictions that accompany ethnic and religious identities run deep. And any call for forgiveness and reconciliation may well appear misplaced and premature in a situation where the 'healing' has hardly begun.

In spite of these larger constraints however, there must be ways to ease this tension through the positive communication of the wealth of India's religious traditions. India carries the imprint of numerous religions and Indians are, in general, a religious people. Recognition of this fact is critical to any strategy aimed at restoring inter-faith amity. Ignorance of this reality needs to be recognised as a key contributory factor to the tensions – ignorance that is manipulated by fundamentalists on all sides of the divide. The average evangelist in India is woefully ignorant of Hinduism – his/her knowledge is often inadequate, couched in prejudice and determined by imported understandings that are insensitive to say the least. Unfortunately, the average Indian Christian too is often seen to share such views.

First, it would seem that at the very least, all religious communities in India need to communicate their faith responsibly, without, in that process, attacking or under-

mining other faiths. Secondly, in the light of the deteriorating quality of faith reporting, religious councils in India could be jointly involved in drawing up an inter-faith media charter. These councils need to make an attempt to work jointly towards the creation of an ombudsman who would have the power to take action against those who violate this charter. Further, inter-faith efforts may be encouraged made to set up a multi-faith cable television channel, along the lines of the Toronto-based inter-faith cable channel Vision TV. The objective of such a network will be to broadcast objective interpretations of faiths, religious traditions and spiritualities from and to the sub-continent. Such a service is needed to counter the present norm – the token space given to religion by state broadcasting and programmes which merely strengthen stereotypical perceptions of the religious other. At the very least such an initiative will create a shared space for imagining a different India.

Lastly, it is necessary that religious institutions take seriously the challenge posed by inter-faith dialogue. In pluralist societies like India, where the issue of religion has become emotive and divisive, these institutions need to be called to create the basis for reconciliation and understanding. Bishop Tutu first expressed the following opinion in Kigali, Rwanda, which was reproduced in the Truth Commission's report from South Africa.[45] 'Confession, forgiveness and reconciliation in the lives of nations are not just airy-fairy religious and spiritual things, nebulous and unrealistic. They are the stuff of practical politics.' His affirmation communicates the fact that faith is both relational and grounded in the practical business of daily living. One cannot but love one's neighbour. Disregarding that simple, human option can, as we know too well, result in bitter consequences. ■

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War in Bosnia – moving images

Dina Iordanova

FORUM

A continuous footage taken through the window of a moving car. The houses on both sides of the road are either fully burnt or semi-destroyed. It goes on like this mile after mile.

Footage taken with a hand-held camera. Men and women sitting in puddles of their own blood on the sidewalk where they were lining up for bread moments ago, stretching out hands to the man behind the camcorder, and thus to the spectator.

A medium-close of a scruffy peasant father, bending over a packet wrapped in a glittery green material – the body of his infant son. There is not even a casket for the baby, just this piece of bright synthetic fabric, leaving an intensely-coloured imprint of grief in one's visual memory.

Bosnia. Sarajevo. The image inventory continues with elderly villagers now lying in the mud of their own back-yards with bullet holes in the backs of their hand-knit jackets, checkpoints controlled by paramilitary thugs with self-styled pony-tails and cockades on fur caps, pedestrians on city streets half-running to escape the sniper fire, and large peasant women in black kerchiefs and aprons, shouting at the camera in discontent, fed up of being filmed again and again asking about their missing husbands. The iconic repertoire only slightly changes with the change of circumstance, particularly visible with the eruption of the new crisis in Kosovo, as virtually the same visual tropes are being repeatedly used. The face of the Balkans remains the same – destroyed churches and mosques, refugee women in camps, stray sheep on the dusty streets of Muslim enclaves, and alien UN forces.

So much death and destruction has been filmed, and the footage of crippled children and desolate people is so abundant that it is difficult to forget that behind each one of these images there is the enormity of real suffering.

This text surveys the wide range and variety of films that were made in response to the 1990s crisis in the Balkans, and mostly the Bosnian war. Why film? Because looking at cinematic texts helps bringing to light the underlying dynamics of cross-cultural dialogue as it unravels within the wider context of mediated perceptions and misperceptions. In addition to looking at the written word, it is very important to look at the films and the visual materials related to the Balkans in the 1990s. The visual has a crucial role in discourse formation at any level and the transmitted images function in a variety of ways that are at least as influential as the exchange of ideas and concepts. In today's world it is much more likely that images have been seen by many rather than written comments. It is not difficult to sustain the claim that nowadays the moving image has attained a bigger persuasive power compared to the printed word in spite the fact that this important role of the visual is rarely being pointed at in a persistent manner. The role of mediated images, however, is so subtle that it often remains unaccounted for.

Contrary to the commonly shared opinion, I do not think that these images left everybody indifferent. There is plenty of evidence suggesting that print and broadcast media, as well as journalists and filmmakers did a lot to show the ugly face of ethnic war. The lessened receptiveness and responsiveness of the audience living in an over saturated media environment is a whole different matter. Still, the efforts of those who did not stay indifferent but did their best to take the moving image of war and pass it around through the modern medium of film were really comprehensive and deserve to be recognized.

Body of works

The body of film productions about the Balkan conflict is, in its nature, a truly international project. From the point of view of its international perception, the Bosnian war has often been compared to the Civil War in Spain. Writers like Susan Sontag or Roger Cohen wondered why intellectuals from around the world did not go to Sarajevo to express their solidarity, as they went to Madrid. In fact, however, hundreds of intellectuals engaged in public support to the cause of ending the war in ex-Yugoslavia and went to Sarajevo and Bosnia.

The best visible expression of solidarity, however, came from the international community of filmmakers. They gathered in the Balkans from many different countries around the world -from the UK, USA, Canada, France, Belgium, Netherlands, Switzerland, Austria, Norway, Spain, Italy, the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Greece, Australia, New Zealand, and Russia. References to the Balkan war can be found in a big number of films from the 1990s – from late British Derek Jarman's *Blue* (1993) who, while chronicling his own death from AIDS, talks about the plight of Bosnian refugees to Hungarian Ibolya Fekete's *Bolshe* Vita (1996) featuring documentary footage from the Bosnian war in its epilogue.

The number of films – feature and documentary – made in response to the Bosnian war, is at least two hundred. There are reasons, however, to set the actual number at around three hundred.

Features

At least thirty five feature films have been made internationally in direct or indirect response to the Bosnian war. The global trend that turns all feature filmmaking into a multi-national enterprise is clearly visible in the case of the

features that look at aspects of the Yugoslav breakup. *Comanche Territory* (1997), for example, tells a story about Sarajevo but is a co-production of Spain, Germany, France, and Argentina. *Someone Else's America* (1995) was written and directed by Serbs, and was telling the story of exiles from Montenegro and Spain who lived in New York but who also travelled to the Mexican border at Rio Grande. The film was produced by France, UK, Germany, and Greece – neither one of these countries being referred to in the film in any way. *Before the Rain* (1994) was financed by France, the UK, and Macedonia. *Welcome to Sarajevo* (1997) was a UK-USA co-production.

Some of the films, indeed, were produced with financing from only one country, but nevertheless featured an ethnically diverse production crew and international cast. The New Zealand production, *Broken English (1996),* the story of an inter-ethnic couple oppressed by a violent Croatian father, brought Maoris, Croatians, and Chinese together on the set. The Italian *Gamebag (1997)* used a Bulgarian actress in the leading role and told the story of two Italian hunters caught in the middle of the Sarajevan siege. Greek *Ulysses Gaze (1995)* featured an international cast which included American Harvey Keitel, Swede Erland Josephson, and Romanian Maya Morgenstern, and told the story of a weary Greek expatriate travelling through the Balkan lands in search of lost memories of harmonious co-existence.

Major European directors turned their attentiveness to the Balkans: some to enjoy acclaim, like Theo Angelopoulos with his complex *Ulysses Gaze,* some to face criticism, like Jean-Luc Godard with his *For Ever Mozart (1996),* another projection of the crisis in the work of this formerly influential filmmaker.

Still, most features came from the countries of former Yugoslavia – Bosnia and Herzegovina *(Perfect Circle),* Serbia *(Pretty Village, Pretty Flame),* Croatia *(How the War Started on My Little Island),* and Macedonia *(Before the Rain, Across the Lake).*

The films were telling different stories. The most ambitious ones were tackling the complex history of the Balkans, like *Underground* or *Ulysses Gaze.* Some chose to focus on the fate of displaced children in Sarajevo *(Perfect Circle),* others – on the stagnation in Belgrade *Premeditated Murder, Marble Ass),* on committed journalists *(Welcome to Sarajevo, Comanche Territory),* on the difficult choices in taking sides *(Before the Rain, Pretty Village, Pretty Flame, Savior),* or on the experiences of displacement *(Broken English, Someone Else's America, Tired Companions).*

The mushrooming of new countries after the break-up of Yugoslavia was felt as far as the entertainment field – starting as early as 1994 critics in trade journals could not help noticing the proliferation of East European entries for the Oscar competition. Whereas before Yugoslavia would submit only a single entry, now there were five countries eager to compete. None of the submitted films has won an Academy award until now, but it is nevertheless interesting to look at the entries. Rump Yugoslavia's entry for 1994, for example, was *Vukovar: Poste Restante* (dir. Boro Draskovic) a production of USA, Cyprus, Italy, and Yugoslavia, and for 1995 – Underground (dir. Emir Kusturica), a production of France, Germany, and Hungary with participation of Radio-TV Serbia. Many of the feature films were surrounded by controversies and by allegations of subtle propaganda. While in some cases the allegations were blown out of proportion, like *Vukovar,* in some others, like Kusturica's there is serious evidence that the director betrayed his own Sarajevan roots and put himself in the service of Belgrade.[1]

Documentaries

In documentaries, the number of which surpasses one hundred and fifty, the Balkan crisis attracted the attention of internationally renowned documentarists, such as French veterans Chris Marker and Marcel Ophuls. Documentaries were made by well-known public intellectuals whose usual domain is the written word, like French Bernard-Henry Levy and Canadian Michael Ignatieff. Some displaced Yugoslav directors returned from exile to make their films, while some other Yugoslav directors had to go into exile to make their films.

There were documentaries that scrutinized and critically investigated Western mercenaries, the UNPROFOR and the UN involvement, the perpetrators, the workings of media, the Islamic point of view, and the refugee camps. There was a range of documentaries on issues as far apart as the Serbian point of view, the cultural criticism of *Neue Slowenische Kunst (NSK)* and *Laibach,* and the life in Bosnia after the war. The best known documentary of all these probably remains the international TV co-production *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation,* produced by British-based *Brian Lapping Associates,* which used a large variety of documentary sources and featured interviews with most of the main political figures in the conflict.[2]

Critical voices from within Yugoslavia came up with a specific genre of short films, which can be placed somewhere between documentary and fiction and used re-enactment and autobiographical elements. The hilarious Studio B92 Zelimir Zilnik's *Tito Among the Serbs for a Second Time (1993)* who sends a Tito impersonator to take a stroll around downtown Belgrade reveals a great deal about the state of mind of ordinary Serbs and provides more social insights than any piece of investigative journalism. Films like *Ghetto* (1995), again a production of the dissident Studio B92, showing a rock musician cruising around his native Belgrade and seeing his avant-garde artist friends gathering in basements while the public space is made readily available to ecstatic turbo-folk crowds, or *Hole in the Soul,* a Scottish BBC documentary by exiled Dusan Makavejev who witnesses the isolation of his Yugoslavia in a cosmopolitan context, are deeply personal works of people who painfully experience the gradual profanation of their homeland.

Films about Sarajevo

The topic of several dozens of films is Sarajevo, and this way parallel with its destruction, the city was perpetually revived in the films chronicling its proud survival. There were films telling about the inhumanity of everyday life in

Sarajevo, about the children of Sarajevo, about the women, about the villains, about the artists, about the horrors of war, and the insanity. There were the features set in Sarajevo, seen by larger audiences. Of these, only the story of Ademir Kenovic's *Perfect Circle* (1997) about the bonding of a lonely writer and two orphaned boys, was told from a point of view of local people, while all others followed the formula of the transplanted Western narrator. There were well researched and well presented human interest stories, like the heartbreaking real story of a Sarajevo inter-ethnic couple who tried to escape the city but were shot down by snipers. There were films that told the story from a very personal point of view, like *Exile in Sarajevo* (1997) made by an Australian, Tahir Cambis, who, while making the movie, fell in love with his Bosnian translator. There have been films that proved that even black, the humour of Sarajevans is still intact, like *Mizaldo* (1994) which was made as an extended infomercial about the city. And last, the most important genre – the chronicles that Sarajevans themselves shot about themselves – the works of the *Sarajevo Group of Authors (SaGA),* of Ademir Kenovic, Pjer Zalica, Mirza Idrizovic, Benjamin Filipovic, and many others who chronicled the agony and the strength of heir city on a day to day basis.

Other formats

Besides the feature and documentary format, there have been many more productions that remain lesser known and difficult to chronicle. There have been local productions by filmmakers that never got into distribution. Besides the TV documentaries produced and aired by BBC 1 and 2, CNN, PBS, Channel Four, and others, there have been many more TV programmes that are difficult to trace. One should note that while most of the British documentaries were made for TV and thus received better exposure, the bulk of American documentaries were made independently and ended up underexposed, mostly seen at festivals or at occasional screenings.

Further, there was the genre of the so-called home-videos, shot on the spot in former Yugoslavia and then distributed via clandestine channels to the relevant diasporas across the world.[3]

I have also come across references to two more types of videotaped material but the information about them is not systematic. The first type are the many hours worth of videotaped victim's testimonies that the commission, appointed by the UN to investigate the war crimes in former Yugoslavia and chaired by DePaul University's law professor Cherif Bassiouni, has collected. Some of these videos are being currently used in the work of the Hague tribunal. The other type are the videotaped rapes that are being discussed by feminist writers such as Catherine McKinnon and Beverly Allen who report on allegations that such tapes are being sold at clandestine pornographic markets in Romania and other Central East European countries. I, however, have not found sufficient evidence of the existence of such tapes.

In addition to film, there has been intensive activity in the field of multimedia, and new technologies have been used to pass the message across. Exploring those is not my subject, but nevertheless some interesting multimedia projects should be mentioned such as the French-supported Sarajevo on-line journalism project, the on-line exhibits of the Sarajevo pop-group Trio and of fine artists trapped by the siege in Sarajevo, or the web-site of the Zagreb-based feminist group *Nona* featuring the creative work of refugee women.

Festivals

Reputed international film festivals which have built an attentive and committed audience proved to be the ideal venue for the films about Bosnia. And, indeed, programmers across the world did a lot to bring the films about the conflict in former Yugoslavia to their festivals.

The first major festival to schedule a special series related to Bosnia was the one in Berlin. It held a programme called *No More War* in February 1993. Ironically, this scheduling was a bit rushed – only a few films had appeared by the time and the end of the war was nowhere near in sight. The programme included a few documentaries by German and French filmmakers. As no feature had yet been made at the time, the programme included a film by Bosnian-born Emir Kusturica – *Arizona Dream* (1992) – which, however, dealt with Kusturica's vision of America and barely touched the Bosnian crisis.

Since 1993 films related to the war in former Yugoslavia started regularly appearing at all major feature and documentary film festivals. In 1994 Milcho Manchevski's *Before the Rain* won the Golden Lion at the Venice Film Festival. The 1995 Cannes season brought awards to Kusturica's *Underground* and Angelopoulos's *Ulysses Gaze*. *Mizaldo* won the Grand Prize at the Mediterranean Film Festival in Rome in 1995. Michael Winterbottom's *Welcome to Sarajevo,* the story of a Western journalist in Sarajevo who cannot remain neutral and helps a Bosnian girl to escape the horrors of war, was one of the main contestants at Cannes in 1997. SrdJan Dragojevic's *Pretty Village, Pretty Flame,* telling the story of two childhood friends who end up fighting against each other in Bosnia, received recognition at festivals all over the world. Kenovic's *Perfect Circle* won the main award at the 1997 Tokyo Film Festival.

Films from and about the Balkans played at special panoramas at the International Documentary Filmfest in Amsterdam in 1993, at the International Feminist Filmfest in Creteil, France in 1997, and at the Toronto International Film Festival in 1997. Regularly films about Bosnia were featured at the Sundance Film Festival, at the Human Rights Watch Film Festival, at the festivals in Montreal, Vancouver, San Francisco, Chicago, Mannheim, Karlovy Vary, and London.

Two festivals that regularly showcase the production of and about the region should be mentioned in particular – the Thessaloniki Film Festival and the Alpe-Adria cinema meetings in Trieste. Local festivals that take place in the countries of former Yugoslavia are also important as here most of the domestic productions are shown – Pula, Belgrade, Subotica, and Bitolja. In 1995 a special series called *Sarajevo Film Days* was organized in Zagreb, Croatia. Sarajevans themselves have been quite active in

scheduling film events and there have been several during the siege, organized by various courageous groups and individuals. The Sarajevo International Film Festival held in the fall of 1997 is now becoming a regular event. It is at this venue where Sarajevans can see many of the films made about Bosnia and about themselves.

Besides festivals, there have been many efforts by various groups to provide more exposure to the films. Many human rights activists, academics, or ad hoc groups have undertaken it to produce and distribute video materials to raise the consciousness about the war. TV stations have also had an input. Channel Four in the UX, for example, held the well publicized *Bloody Bosnia* season for a week in August 1993 – an example followed by other TV stations in the West.

Distribution

Depending on the background of the filmmaker, the specific approach, or the target audiences of the distributor, various productions received visibility through various channels. *Miss Sarajevo (1995),* for example, made by U2 fan Bill Carter, became well known to the ones who follow *Billboard* and MTV, whereas all turbo-folk fans in Serbia watched the populist show called *Arkan and Ceca's Wedding (1995).* Mandy Jaconson's *Calling the* Ghosts (1996) is the work best known to feminist audiences – it tells of the difficult path taken by Jadranka Sigelj and Nusreta Sivac, rape survivors from the Bosnian camps, who decide to talk publicly and to testify to the Hague tribunal of their ordeal. Other films reached out to religious audiences: the Croat story of Godmother's appearance, Jacov Sedlar's Gospa (1993), was exhibited by a California-based Catholic film distribution network, while the BBC documentary of Arab correspondent Robert Fisk, *From Beyrut to Bosnia* (1993) explained today's Muslim ideas of world's dynamics. The gay community expressed interest in Zelimir Zilnik's *Marble Ass,* featuring a transvestite prostitute from Belgrade who fights violence in his own special way, while anthropologists showed their students films made by other anthropologists, featuring communal rituals at the intersection of tradition and modernity. As a result of this segmentation of audience, some films became really popular within a limited reception framework while remaining virtually unknown beyond it. Only a few enjoyed a wider exposure.

Many of the acclaimed films about the Balkans have been seen at festivals, but rarely make it to theatrical distribution. In the fall of 1996 *New York Times'* Linda Lee wrote a piece entitled "Films that Win Acclaim but not Distributors," exposing the trend that was making distributors, clearly concerned about box office returns, to avoid committing to films that would be classified as not entertaining.

When it comes to distribution, quality is not always the decisive consideration, as many other factors play a role. Whereas *Be are the Rain,* for example, received a wide distribution, for the equally acclaimed *Pretty Village, Pretty Flame* played only in non-theatrical chains. The situation is partially corrected by some distributors of arthouse type feature films, such as *The New Yorker* (they currently carry *For Ever Mozart, Underground, Vukovar: Poste Restante)* or *October Films* (they distribute *Someone Else's America).*

There are also some paradoxes: With a few exceptions, films made by filmmakers associated with Serbia (SrdJan Dragojevic, Boro Draskovic, Petar Antortijevic, Goran Paskaljevic) have had more exposure in the West than the ones made by Croats or Bosnians. Sarajevo-set Ademir Kenovic's *Perfect Circle,* Bato Cengic's *Mona Lisa in Sarajevo (1998),* and Francois Lunel's *Unexpected Walk (1997)* and *Heroes (1999)* have barely been seen in the West.

As if reiterating the old prejudices to people (respectively filmmakers) from the Balkans, films made about the Balkan conflict by Westerners have enjoyed much better exposure than films made by local filmmakers. A good example is the widely publicized *Predictions of Fire (1996)* by Michael Benson and the largely unknown *Laibach: A Film from Slovenia (1993)* by Goran GaJic, both dealing in an almost identical manner with the phenomenon of the *Neue Slovenische Kunst* and the rock-group *Lafflach.*

Another example would be French Bernard-Henry Levy's *Bosna!(1994)* which extensively uses footage shot under fire by the members of *SaGA,* the Sarajevo Group of Authors. Whereas Levy's film was distributed in both *35*mm and on video, and seen on TV in most Western countries, the films produced by SaGA have rarely been screened even at festivals. There have been reports on many Western TV companies or documentary filmmakers who have expressed interest and have obtained permission to use SaGA's footage, while at the same time SaGA's attempts to distribute their own documentaries containing this same footage have failed.

One more example – I managed to see the very impressive *Death in Sarajevo (1995)* only after I had the chance to personally meet with its author. the exiled Sarajevan comparative literature professor Tvrtko Kulenovic, and he lent me his only video copy which was gathering dust on a bookshelf at his Chicago home. At the same time *Urbicide: A Sarajevo Diary (1993)* a film of the same length, subject matter., and sensibility, made by British Bill Tribe, also a professor at Sarajevo, played on Channel Four and is available in video distribution.

Whereas the feature films have at least the chance to end up in the system of non-theatrical distribution or within the festival circuit., the picture in documentaries is deplorable. Only a few have found distributors, and even those are quite often poorly advertised or are listed at prices that even institutions can rarely afford. *Electronic Arts Intermix,* for example, which carries the remarkable Chris Marker's *Prime Time in the Camps (1993)* only advertises to programmers, and the *Cinema Guild* routinely charges $300 in the average for a video – *Truth Under Siege (1995),* an excellent documentary tackling the workings of independent media across former Yugoslavia, has ended up with them which by definition limits its distribution chances. There is a huge unrealized potential in documentary distribution, and many of the best films still remain unseen.

There have been some archival efforts, like the *International Monitor Institute* in Los Angeles and the

Documentation Centre of Social Movements in Amsterdam. The AudioVisual Department at the *Central European University,* Budapest have a collection of videotapes related to the conflict in former Yugoslavia. The *Soros Foundation* branches in Bosnia, Croatia and other countries of former Yugoslavia and Eastern Europe have been involved with a number of various projects to promote the work of local filmmakers about the conflict. The researchers at the video department of the *U.S. Holocaust Museum* in Washington, D.C. organized the exhibit *Faces of Sorrow* in *1994,* and are collecting videotapes related to the conflict in former Yugoslavia. But even if they manage to compile a comprehensive collection of tapes, these will be available only to researchers. The documentary body of work about Bosnia remains and will remain largely unseen and unexposed.

I first became interested in the films made in response to the Balkan crisis in *1994.* Only in the fall of *1996,* however, did I have the chance to start systematically researching and exploring this body of cinematic works. It was at that time when a well-wishing academic friend told me that I was probably wasting my time. The formal end of the hostilities, he claimed, meant also fading interest in the topic – and not only amidst the general public, but within academia as well. Only if the bloodshed continued could I expect to enjoy the interest of publishers and journal editors alike.

Well, I wish he was wrong. As I write this in the summer of 1999, however, we live in the aftermath of the disturbing Kosovo war, and new images of endless human suffering, of burned bodies and burning oil refineries have occupied our minds. To make the Kosovo-related documentaries and satisfy the immediate need of the day, in 1999 production companies hastily scan the archives for documentary footage of the notorious visit of Slobodan Milosevic to Kosovo in 1987 – this same footage that was discovered by accident in the archive of Belgrade TV by researchers for *Yugoslavia: The Death of a Nation* but was not used very much as it did not seem that important. Documentaries about Albania – some were made in the early 1990s by Gill Rosselini and Paul Jay, for example – are now retrieved and shown, and a number of films dealing with border-crossings between Albania, Greece, and Macedonia are in the process of making. Authors who wrote about Bosnia returned to their files looking for research notes dealing with the ethnic Albanians – material never used before as until recently it seemed irrelevant. The names of Bosnian places which appeared and then disappeared from the public mind – Gorazde, Prijedor, JaJce, Zvornik, are now replaced by another set of names – Pristina, Jakobica, Prizren, Blace.

Critics often underline that the best Vietnam-war films were made in America only years after the end of the war *(Deer Hunter,* 1978; *Apocalypse Now,* 1979; *Platoon, 1986; Full Metal Jacket,* 1987; Good *Morning, Vietnam,* 1987; *Dear America: Letters Home from Vietnam,* 1988; *Born on the Fourth of July,* 1989), and the Vietnam-war topic featured powerfully in Hollywood as recently as 1995 with *Forest* Gump. In analogy, as time passes, further serious films about the Balkans will be made. Those whose lives were deeply affected and shattered by what happened in ex-Yugoslavia in the early 1990s will be coming to the topic of the Bosnian war again and again. The future works on the subject will not come from people like starship-bound Michael Winterbottom or from Emir Kusturica, who does not seem to grasp what the critics against him are all about and who has turned to romantic comedy lately. One should expect more important works about the troubled Balkans, however, to come from Theo Angelopoulos, Ademir Kenovic, and Goran Paskaljevic, whose *Powder Keg* screened out of competition at the Venice film festival in 1998 to raving reviews. Every month there are reports of some new project in the works, mostly documentaries, but also features while the planned Hollywood production *Age of Aquarius* with Harrison Ford experienced financial difficulties and was cancelled, Canada is soon to release *West of Sarajevo,* shot near Vancouver, Britain – *Beautiful People* which is shot on location near Liverpool, and in Italy veteran Lina Wertmtiller is completing work on *An Interesting State,* starring Daniel Auteull, Harvey Keitel and Vanessa Redgrave.in the years to come, Balkan filmmakers themselves will be coming back to the topics of taking sides, villains and victims, displacement and migrations. Many more important works will appear that will treat the topic of the war in the Balkans. and of the healing process which has presumably begun. ■

Endnotes

1 I discuss this issue at length in my 'Kusturica's *Underground:* Historical Allegory or Propaganda.' *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and TV,* March 1999.

2 *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation.* (1995) Documentary in four parts. Production: Brian Lapping Associates Co-production: BBC (UK), Canal+ (France), Discovery Channel (USA), ORF (Austria), VRPO (The Netherlands), RTBF (Belgium), SVT2 (Sweden), NRK (Norway), Danmarks Radio (Danemark) et ABC (Australia). Exec. producer: Brian Lapping. Narrated by Robin Ellis. Directors Angus McQueen and Paul Mitchell.

3 For an interesting discussion of the reception of such home videos by the Croatian and Macedonian communities in Perth, Australia see Dona Kolar-Panov's book *Video, War and the Diasporic Imagination.* London and New York: Routledge. 1997.

Dina Iordanova is co-author of *BFI's Companion to East uropean and Russian Cinema* (London: 1999). Her book *Film, Mass Mediation and the Bosnian Crisis* is forthcoming.

ON THE PAGE...

Where Is the Women's News Beat? A review of Women, Democracy and the Media, *by Sonia Bathla, Sage, 1998, p. 209.*

Sonia Bathla's *Women, Democracy and Media* has a textbook crispness to it. It comprises seven chapters. The first three are theoretical and methodological in their scope. They establish the coordinates for this study. The next three chapters examine the many ways in which women are represented or excluded by the media. The last chapter paraphrases the arguments of the book and contains suggestions that are addressed to policy makers.

The theoretical chapters gather together ideas about democracy, the public sphere, hegemony and consent from various sources. (Many of these are actually tame sociological reformulations of radical concepts from political theory. As such, they are somewhat tendentious.) Having thus assembled a set of ideas, Sonia Bathla presents us with her conceptual and analytical framework. She suggests that democratic systems work with notions of communication and consensus. These are usually achieved in and through mediations in a public sphere. In our own times, such mediations take place largely in spaces made available by the media: 'Replacing the model of face-to-face communication or public gatherings of the past to discuss public issues, media today acts as the mediator and facilitator between policy-makers and the citizenry' (p.15).

But is the media truly representative of the range of concerns which are present in a modern democratic society? Do women, for example, figure in the media as much as men? Are women's opinions and anxieties heeded and brought to public attention by the media? Does the media promote and influence particular notions of femininity? Sonia Bathla takes up for close reading and analysis a Delhi-based English daily, *The Hindustan Times*, and critically interrogates its reporting, stories, editorials and articles (chosen from four different years, 1981, 1985, 1989 and 1993), to find her answers. She also interviews journalists, both men and women, and women's groups activists to test her own findings.

Bathla's conceptual framework appraises two important things: the place and visibility of women in the public sphere and the cultural and social factors which determine this presence (or absence). In the first instance, she looks at the different ways in which women have acted or been prevented from acting effectively in the public sphere: here, her examples are drawn from a number of histories, ranging from the French revolution to the Indian Independence struggle. Then she shifts her attention to the Indian social context and asks why women in India have found it so hard to be heard and heeded. What is the basis for the division of social and cultural life into public and private spheres? What are the factors which sustain and enforce this division? What ideas justify it, legitimise it?

Though she does not offer clear-cut answers to these questions, Sonia Bathla addresses them by detailing various sorts of discrimination and violence against women. These acts, she argues, are permitted and naturalised by culture; this culture may have a certain material basis but it cannot therefore be reduced to it. Cultural practices are threaded in with social life and determine human behaviour, interaction and communication. They help to naturalise social and cultural arrangements so that women and men both accept the secondary status of women. In this context that Bathla invokes the rather weighty idea of 'brahminical hegemony' to explain how cultural consensus is achieved in Indian society.

This consensus, she suggests, is so deep rooted that neither civil law nor state authority can effectively interfere with it. On the contrary both are influenced and shaped by it. Bathla next looks at how women, women's lives and issues actually figure in the pages of *The Hindustan Times*. The information in this section is interesting and revealing though much of the ground has already been covered in earlier works such as *Whose News?,* by A. Joseph and K. Sharma (New Delhi, Sage, 1994), and in occasional reports and studies by women's organisations.

Yet there are valuable things here: for instance it was a surprise to this reader at least to know how news beats are organised, what sources of information do reporters have recourse to and how news is actually processed and produced. Bathla suggests that in India at least the production of news is vitally dependent on the various state structures which provide information on crime, political happenings, policy measures and so on. In such a context would the news media wish to be critical of its sources, since it is these which sustain the daily fare of newspapers?

This is an important question and deserves to be addressed critically and seriously. Since Bathla's purpose is different, she merely poses the question but moves on to look at how women related stories are produced. Her findings reveal that women figure in the news chiefly in the context of violence,

either as victims or as supplicants. These stories are covered for the fluttering interest they are likely to provoke, but rarely does a reporter get a chance or gives himself the option to follow up on a particular story, inquire into its fundamental causes. (Women's issues figure extremely rarely in editorials and as sustained news stories.)

Besides, even where violent tales are concerned there are limits to what may be covered: rape and sexual assault are more likely to be deemed newsworthy than, say, domestic violence. Bathla argues that the media is bound by a code that prevents it from identifying and interrogating structures and practices which subordinate women. Therefore, in spite of its much vaunted role in a democracy and its insistence on its rights to freedom of expression, the media often practises a tacit self-censorship.

This, notwithstanding the women's movement which has struggled hard and pushed the media to heed women's concerns. But then, wonders Bathla, has the women's movement been able to create its own news and public agenda? Why has it been shy of the press? She offers a few tentative answers, but her observations are empirical and contextual and do not really help us understand the complex strategies of inclusion and exclusion which constitute a public sphere. It is not merely the fact of women reporters or journalists not wanting to be identified with soft feminine stories, that has created a public sphere where women do not matter. The problem is, the public sphere in India keeps out a range of people: the poor, the minorities, people from the backward and oppressed castes . . . Their absence is crucial for the practice of that democracy promoted and upheld by the media: genteel, temperate and conservative. The exclusion of women has to be seen in this context. The problem cannot be redressed by a more gender-sensitive education system alone, as Bathla suggests. We need to ask ourselves, what sort of a public sphere and democracy do we want for our layered and complex society, where social and economic divisions are both graded and unequal?

Before I conclude, a few observations: the book employs theoretical concepts – such as brahminical hegemony – which are too vast and complex without actually locating them in history or anthropology. Bathla assembles quotations from a range of authors which help her formulate the notion, but the notion itself serves a purely rhetorical function in her narrative. Secondly, her empirical research appears far too narrow and limited, given the vastness of her purpose, which is to show how the media, a crucial component of the public sphere, actively excludes women. In this sense her findings mirror her data and do not help us understand those larger and extremely complex forces which go to constitute the public sphere. The prejudices of male editors, the internalised oppression of women readers and reporters, the existence of a (vaguely-defined) cultural consensus do not really help one understand how women are rendered absent.

To address this crucial exclusion, we need to understand the specific and precise nature of the links between knowledge, social status, gender and representation. The idea of brahminical hegemony may be well deployed to this end, but the book does not do this. For the most part, it offers functional explanations rather than theoretical ones.

Lastly, must one surrender the energy of one's thought to the deadening language of sociology? Bathla's book would have been less pedantic, if she had spoken in her own voice.

V. Geetha

Héctor Schmucler, **Memoria de la Comunicación**, *Editorial Biblos, Buenos Aires, 1997, 302 págs.*

Recordando a Walter Benjamin, quien afirmara que "la memoria es el medio de lo vivido" y que quien recuerda "no debe temer volver siempre a la misma situación, esparcirla como se esparce la tierra, revolverla como se revuelve la tierra" (págs.9-10), Schmucler desgrana en este libro la experiencia de la investigación en comunicación que le ha tocado vivir y participar en las últimas décadas. En su aporte se descubren los asombros y los cambios, las incertidumbres y las deserciones. Sus análisis se insertan en situaciones sociopolíticas concretas y ofrecen la reflexión de quien se comprende como parte de esa historia. Los viejos y nuevos temas del tecnologismo y su refuerzo del poder transnacional, la cultura y el desarrollo, los efectos de la comunicación, el papel de la investigación y el NOMIC, son algunos de los temas sobre los que se teje una reflexión que se enriquece con el aporte de una profunda reflexión humana. Este sea quizás uno de los rasgos característicos del aporte de Schmucler quien, con una rica prosa, conjuga junto a una sólida reflexión teórica el interrogante y la búsqueda de la dimensión trascendente.

Dos estudios puntuales se destacan. El primero, escrito en 1972 es un análisis de "La Opinión", un periódico que ha hecho historia en el periodismo latinoamericano que le permite describir un momento particular de la historia y pintar a una peculiar clase emergente. Por eso considera que se trata de un diario dirigido a una clase que "desespera por su marginalidad histórica (y) suprime lo cotidiano como carente de importancia." Para ella el periódico "asume el desorden del mundo … libera (al lector) de buscar las causas de un mecanismo social verdaderamente irracional para quien no vea la profunda racionalidad que lo sistematiza." El segundo, mucho más reciente, es una aguda reflexión crítica sobre filme de Spielberg "La lista de Schindler", al que considera inserto en el "escándalo de estetizar el horror". Schmucler alerta sobre el peligro de una estética que, transgrediendo los límites de la dignidad humana en su sufrimiento y dolor, borre todo indicio de tragedia y horror.

Hay tres sustanciosos capítulos dedicados al tema de la investigación. Escritos en diversas épocas mantienen un coherente desarrollo no obstante las distintas etapas históricas en que fueron escritos. Schmucler considera a la investigación como un elemento de importancia en la vida de la sociedad. En los tres presta esencial atención a los cambios que se van experimentando. En el primero (1975) se inclina por definir al objeto de estudio de la investigación "más bien como una función: la circulación de ideología en condiciones particulares de circulación" y su lugar "desde el interior de un proyecto global de comunicación." (pág.143) Posteriormente (1982) el

acento se pone en la relación comunicación/cultura y en la necesidad de desbordar los contornos de las disciplinas, porque "la comunicación no es todo, pero debe ser hablada desde todas partes." (pág.151) Su tercer capítulo (l996) registra el repliegue, la fatiga y el conformismo que se observa en el campo de la investigación en comunicaciones. Allí se explaya sobre cómo, a partir de su asumido papel de seductor, el mercado "invita al goce y a la libertad sin transgredir reglas. Los académicos e investigadores, descubierta la verdad del mercado, podían abandonar el fastidioso ejercicio de la denuncia. " (pág.155) Cree, sin embargo, que hay todavía muchas excepciones, por lo que hay que darle valor a los obstáculos que se interponen al verdadero debate y a la franca discusión, para lo cual considera a "la ideología dominante" como una pobre respuesta.

Schmucler, quien está ejerciendo actualmente, entre otras actividades, la docencia y la investigación en la Universidad de Córdoba, Argentina, donde dirige el Área de Comunicación del Centro de Estudios Avanzados, concluye su estimulante libro con una reflexión sobre la nostalgia que enmarca su acentuado humanismo. "Mi hablar desde la nostalgia quisiera ser –contra cualquier apariencia– un rasgo de optimismo. Es afirmar la creencia en que existe posibilidad de una salida, aunque el camino que transitemos nos lleva al derrumbe." (pág.268) Es a partir de esta nostalgia esperanzada que su obra responde con coherencia al anhelo del sentido de justicia, dignidad y vida.

Carlos A. Valle

When the powers fall. (Reconciliation in the healing of the nations), *by Walter Wink, Fortress Press, Mineapolis.*

Walter Wink has written the introductory volume to a series which the Swedish Life and Peace Institute is currently publishing under the overall title*: Reconciliation and the Church in Transition to Democracy.* It will be followed by specific booklets on the situation in various regions of the world. Wink deals with the way in which nations can come to terms with their violent past in preparation for nation-building.

Most of this booklet (66 pages in all) is taken up by the experiences made in different countries with attempts to reconcile societal groups, which were totally estranged during long periods of oppressive totalitarian and mostly military rule. As his book shows, reconciliation takes different forms in different situations. I was struck by the fact that so many of the attempts at coming to terms with the past, as described here, were so compromised by political bigotry as to become hardly effective.

That makes it difficult for me to feel at home in the first chapter of *When the powers fall* where the author tries to link the concept of the Rule (kingdom) of God in the New Testament with the reconciliation efforts described. Wink transcribes Jesus' message of the *Kingom at hand* as a proclamation of a 'domination-free society', that is a society in which economic exploitation and violence have been overcome. Yet he makes the Message of Jesus so actual that his apocalyptic vision, so common for the Judaism of his time, is actualised away. This preaching-style of argument is sympathetic but it gets the reader into all kinds of new problems with New Testament texts. Translating the content of the Gospels to our time is a little more complicated than is suggested here! Communicators especially will need a bit more help to find the necessary detours between text and the reality of today.

What I do like very much is Winks' emphasis on the need for truth-telling. Indeed, if anything has illuminated us in the experiences of the many countries trying their hand at revealing truths about repression and crimes against humanity, it is the extraordinary power of (finally) revealing the facts. In the South African example, which for a number of precise reasons is the most impressive of all the truth-finding exercises, one can see that the pivotal place given to the public exhibition of the crimes during the apartheid regime (and not only the overwhelming evidence against the *white* perpetrators) honoured the victims, often restored the dignity of their families and also resulted in a kind of self-judgement of the perpetrators, whether they were remorseful or not.

My trouble with Winks' theological thesis is that Jesus in his reconciliatory advocacy did not stress this point very much. And the emphasis which the Gospels put on forgiveness is often absent in the modern reconciliation stories, at least in the way forgiveness is often understood in modern cultures. Personally I believe that most of that discrepancy comes from the modern psychological emphasis on forgiveness. In the New Testament the term 'forgiveness' is much less emotional and much more juridical: it is not our feelings that change but our relationship.

Whatever, Winks' booklet makes good reading both for politicians and churches, the latter especially because they can learn much humility from the way in which church-leaders and denominations have in many cases been totally useless in the great work of reconciliation. It is never too late to repent, however, and the many hopeful experiences of 'reconciliation at work' will help us not to give up.

Albert van den Heuvel

The Web of Text and the Web of God: An Essay on the Third Information Transformation, *by Alan C. Purves. New York: 1998: Guilford Press. ISBN 1-57230-249-6. Hb. 240pp. £21.95.*

What Alan Purves attempts in this book is interesting, but perhaps premature. Written and printed texts, he says, were for a long while effectively invisible, we were only interested in what they said, in content rather than form, until the form itself began to be challenged. Once TV and computers began to dominate our cultural (if not cognitive) horizons, literacy and its various wide-ranging implications became of enormous concern to psychologists, anthropologists, philosophers and others. As Purves puts it, 'fish don't study water until the drought begins' (p.24).

The same point might be applied to what he calls the 'third information transformation', namely the development of electronic forms of communication. Until they are challenged by whatever media come to constitute the *fourth* information transformation, we

may not be well placed to offer a critical evaluation of them. Their introduction and rapid domination of the communications environment is simply so recent an event that it raises doubts about whether enough historical distance has been laid down to make for a sharply focused critical analysis.

The Web of Text and the Web of God has a somewhat tentative, provisional and initial air to it. Arguably, its lack of conclusiveness is as much a consequence of when it was written (i.e. as this third information transformation is still unfolding) as it is a comment on the author's intellectual rigour.

Purves takes the development of written language and the invention of the printing press (the first and second of the three major information or technological transformations which he posits) as constituting the 'necessary background' (p.7) to his study. His main focus is on the way in which 'the new writing and information technologies' (p.v) – radio, film, TV, computers, the Internet and the World Wide Web – 'affect our cultural, intellectual, and religious beliefs and structures' (p.v). The problem is, have we been exposed to these new technologies for long enough for their impact to be mapped beyond the rather hazy outlines of speculation?

Certainly Purves's mapping seems to have difficulty drawing in the main topographical features with much clarity. He makes the plausible assertion that: 'As our ways of storing, manipulating, and retrieving information change, so too do our perceptions of the world. Our consciousness has shifted and continues to shift and be reformed' (p.214). As such, it is no surprise to learn that he subscribes 'to a doctrine that the various media affect how we live and work and even think' (pp.195/6), and that Marshall McLuhan's *Understanding Media* and Walter Ong's *Orality and Literacy* have shaped his thinking 'in ways that have become so deep that I barely know when the ideas are mine or theirs' (p.220).

But there are very few specifics in terms of precisely how our perceptions of the world have been changed, or of the ways in which our consciousness has shifted. A clear enumeration of the ways we have been affected by the new media would have strengthened his argument considerably (but it is perhaps just not possible at this stage in the history of communications to compile such a list in any detail).

Despite the comparative lack of concrete substantiation for some of his claims, this is a fascinating book. And whatever we may make of Purves's mapping of the current communications environment and its impact on us, he takes readers through some fascinating and thought-provoking territory. His emphasis on the way in which the development and spread of the great world religions was dependent on writing and print, his likening of the Talmud and the four Gospels to hypertext, his acute comments on icon, image and text, his identification of five links which serve as the connecting threads of the book (anarchy, authority, community, idolatry, network), all this makes *The Web of Text and the Web of God* a worthwhile read for anyone interested in understanding the complex relationships that obtain between religion and media.

Purves originally wrote the book as a hypertext (sometimes defined as 'nonsequential writing') using the programme 'Storyspace'. The demands of book publication meant that he had to rethink his original design. Even so, he has tried to retain the key features of hypertext in the published hard-copy. 'This volume is not hierarchical or sequential', we are told, 'it is anarchic' (p.203). As such, he tells readers that 'there is no order, but there is the possibility for you to order what you have to select and make it yours. You are no longer passive but must see yourself as active' (p.212).

Yet, for all the apparent fluidity and freedom thus implied, in both his delineation of three clear-cut information transformations and in assertions like that on page 108, where we are told 'we have become members of a universe of images, and at this juncture our knowledge is expressed predominantly through them', it seems that there is a print-based hierarchical categorisation at work.

Purves writes as a Christian (and, incidentally, as a member of the First Church of Cyberspace). As such, he says that he finds 'the spiritual and theological implications of the age of hypertext to be the most perplexing and yet the most pressing concerns of all' (p.21) His concern 'is with theophany in the electronic world' (p.21), with the question of how we can think of God when 'the modern consensus has eroded' (p.200). He makes the intriguing suggestion that 'today's cyber-based network may ultimately prove to be the metaphor or the myth through which we come ever closer to God and a personal comprehension of God in our time' (p.20), an observation that might usefully be set beside Neil Postman's McLuhanesque dictum that 'the medium is the metaphor'.

Whilst this suggestion of a rich vein of theological metaphor implicit in the structure of cyberspace looks well worth exploring further, Purves's claim that 'each of us can find a spiritual home in cyberspace' (p.216) seems much more questionable. (And it is somewhat odd, given the book's orientation, that the references are all to print sources. It would, surely, have been appropriate and useful to have provided readers with a 'webliography' as well.)

Finally, though it is good to see that many of his comments on religion refer to a range of faiths – something that seems entirely apt given that a consciousness of religious pluralism is one very important upshot of the third information transformation – it is a shame to find some rather careless generalisations being made about non-Christian faiths. To talk about 'the writings of the Buddha' (p.68), for example, is to create an erroneous view of Buddhist scripture. We have nothing that the Buddha himself wrote, and oral transmission of his sayings was the norm for several centuries after his death. A closer reading of Buddhist thinking might also have introduced Purves to the concept of 'Indra's Net', a powerful metaphor of inter-relationships that would provide a fascinating point of comparison for the webs which concern him.

Chris Arthur

Godless Morality, *by Richard Holloway*. Edinburgh: Canongate, 1999. 190pp.

'Will no one rid me of this turbulent priest?', cried Henry II of Thomas Becket. More than nine hundred years later, certain figures in the church and

government of the United Kingdom may well be silently echoing that plea. Fortunately, Richard Holloway, Episcopal Bishop of Edinburgh, shows every sign of life and, to prove it, has just published his nineteenth book.

In a sympathetic profile in *The Guardian* (18 August 1999), James Meek wrote: 'For conservative clergy and the right-wing press, Holloway is the latest avatar of the spirit of barmy bishopdom – a serpent in the bosom of the church, preaching heresy and social upheaval, a dope-smoking, adultery-condoning, homosexuality-encouraging, fornication-friendly, gospel-doubting, pinko male feminist, leading the British church to ruin and defeat.'

Godless Morality sets out to discover if we have to be religious to be moral, or to believe in God to be good. 'This book is not about God and whether God exists, but it does rest on a belief that we must disconnect religion and God from the struggle to recover some elements of a common ethic. To that extent, therefore, this is a godless book . . .' (pp.4-5).

This is probably why the present Archbishop of Canterbury publicly took Richard Holloway to task for questioning the traditional foundation of moral belief. But the Archbishop should have known better and should have taken more seriously the rest of the same paragraph: '. . . but discerning readers will detect a paradox at work. If there is that which we call God, and God is more than the projection of our own best values and longings for transcendence, then God must be involved in all our moral struggles, so the attempt by humans to discover a morality apart from God might, paradoxically, be God's greatest triumph; and our attempt to live morally as though there were no God might be the final test of faith.'

The author of this book is intensely pragmatic. He knows that ordinary people have very little time for the debates and machinations of the General Synod. So he makes clear at the outset that 'There will be frequent references to God and religion in this book, but the aim is to unite those who believe with those who do not in the discovery of a workable ethic for our time.' The unstressed but essential word here is *workable*. Pie in the sky is not Richard Holloway's way.

Godless Morality consist of six chapters that deal with key social (therefore moral) issues of contemporary British society. They are also issues that face other societies, but the unstated context is Britain today. Chapter 1 discusses the general moral confusion of our time, concluding that 'The genius of improvisation seems to be a better metaphor for actual human moral experience than struggling to apply a single text to every situation' (p.34).

'Unhappy bedfellows' uses biblical narratives to debunk the hypocritical stance that church and society take on matters sexual. 'Was the Trojan Horse Gay?' discusses the 'problem' of bringing God into the moral debate and the claim to divine sanction for moral tradition based on biblical texts. 'What is Your Poison?' explores the different value systems that allow choices to be made between drugs such as marijuana, tobacco and alcohol.

'Life Wars' expertly tackles the controversy of abortion The wise conclusion is that 'It is because we are creatures blessed and afflicted with consciousness that we find ourselves in these predicaments. The fact that, for most of us, there are no simple solutions to these problems should not dismay us' (p.130). 'The Reproductive Supermarket' focuses on artificial insemination techniques and research on human embryos.

The final chapter is about 'Deciding for Ourselves' and it proposes a 'new morality of consent' that responds to situations 'with grace appropriate to the event' (p.159). Richard Holloway does not claim to know all the answers. But he asks relevant questions that are often brushed under the carpet. This is a fascinating and usefully provocative book.

Philip Lee

José Ignacio López Vigil, **Manual Urgente para Radialistas Apasionados**, *Quito, Ecuador, 1997, 550 págs.*

Después de varias décadas de trabajar en radioemisoras, de enseñar los valores de una comunicación que está al servicio de la comunidad, López Vigil vuelca con dinamismo, claridad y profesionalismo, un manual que está siendo y será de enorme provecho para los que se dispongan a comprender y adentrarse en la magia de la radio.

López Vigil es bien conocido en América Latina por sus valiosos y, en algunos casos, no menos controvertidos aportes en series radiales como "Un Tal Jesús". Actualmente es el Coordinador de la Asociación Mundial de Radios Comunitarias AMARC, para América Latina y el Caribe.

La obra cubre todos los aspectos esenciales del lenguaje de la radio y sus géneros. Una buena introducción sobre "los medios en el medio", seguida por una reflexión sobre la "personalidad de la radio", abren el espacio a un amplio y sustancial capítulo sobre el lenguaje radial. Sobre esa base se adentra en el análisis de tres géneros básicos: el dramático, el periodístico y el musical. López Vigil escribe con lenguaje radial, salpicando anécdotas y buen humor. No estamos aquí frente a árido manual técnico, más bien estamos ante el "testimonio" de un profesional comprometido. Su esperanza es que, por un lado, nuestro acercamiento al medio esté motivado por el interés hacia aquellos con quienes vamos a compartir la comunicación y, por otro lado, por el amor hacia una vía de comunicación, que pueda convertirse en la expresión de la vida en comunidad. Por eso dice: "Como el amor a las personas, los objetivos transforman a las instituciones. Una emisora que se entrega a la comunidad, se *populariza* más tarde o más temprano." (pág.540)

No solo en América Latina sino en otras partes del mundo hay un marcado interés y lugar para la radio comunitaria. No es novedad recordar que el mundo está experimentando un creciente desarrollo tecnológico a la vez que registra una enorme concentración de poder de los medios, medios que ahora arguyen que solo pueden regirse por las inamovibles reglas del mercado. Este libro, que comparte la experiencia y la alegría de participar en el medio radiofónico, es una contribución sustancial para la capacitación de "quienes luchan por un mundo donde todos puedan comer su pan y decir su palabra." (pág.8)

Carlos A. Valle