DEMOCRACY, PUBLIC OPINION AND THE MEDIA*

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SUMMARY

I. *Public Opinion*

Even though the notion of *public opinion* had been subject to debate ever since antiquity, the breakthrough really came with the Enlightenment, Rousseau's concepts of *volonté générale* and *opinion générale,* and the French Revolution. In the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries a modern definition made its appearance. Scholars were concerned, among other things, with the development of public opinion: the influence of democratisation upon its growth and the moral implications of broadening the opinion base; the relationship of public opinion to the procedures of democratic government; and the role of public opinion in the rise of political and economic power. In the twentieth century emphasis has been placed both on the value of conceptualisation and of the problem-statement in this area, as well as on the empirical analysis of public-opinion phenomena, such as the value of opinion polls for legislative processes and public policy in a democratic society. In our time public opinion has been inseparably linked with the fate and progress of democracy, with its rise and fall. Over two hundred years since the term was born, the 'Queen of the World' has convincingly revealed its potent force. It brought about the '*annus mirabilis*' of 1989, and by the same token enlarged the democratic space from the Atlantic to the Urals.

II. *The Media*

What uniquely defines this century is the exponential growth of sciences and new technologies. In the second half of the last hundred years industrialisation based on

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* Because of the death of Professor Ziolkowski (see preface) the text of this paper was not revised by the author. The version published here has been revised by the editor.

mechanistic technology has given way to electronic technologies. Their overwhelming presence at the turn of the second and third millennia has changed modes of thought, the manner in which meanings are conveyed, and the way in which the images of the world are formed. In the mass media of communication the media, characteristically, seem to have become an end, not a means. What do these changes portend? Will electronic technology outpace the ability to harness it to socially acceptable ends? Are electronic technologies heading towards an overload of information and, consequently, of reception, and thus towards ultimate impoverishment rather than to greater diversity, creativity and autonomy? What will happen to communities and interpersonal bonding in an electronic society? What should be our response in this era of globalisation to the power of electronic empires to manipulate the social image-world? The mass media of communication, having acquired an increasingly economic, socio-cultural and political character, in the ultimate analysis, pose a challenge to the functioning of democracy.

I

Possibly the vital factor in the functioning of a democratic system is a democratic attitude. This means a belief that all men are equal, and a feeling one might call a sympathetic understanding of people. Such sympathetic understanding of others, their joys and griefs gives rise to an equal recognition of human personalities. The value of "myself" ceases to be essentially different from the value of another's "self". And so a democratic attitude becomes a basis of impartiality.

C. Znamierowski (1888-1967)

1. The basic aim of the paper is to examine the place and role played by two phenomena, i.e., public opinion and the media, in the democratic process. (A footnote: both issues are of vital importance for the functioning of democracy. Both are overwhelming in regard to the scope and complexity of the problems involved. An uneasy question arises as to how justice could possibly be done to them in the allotted space. Well, one cannot but try). I would like to start with the concept of opinion itself. In a nutshell, in social science it is understood as "a judgement, a conviction", a view or belief held by a person on some

issue. It may be expressed or covertly based on value judgements or on any kind of reasoning or evidence. Opinions have many attributes. For instance, we distinguish degrees of clarity in an opinion, degrees of strength or emphasis, and degrees of salience and of ego-involvement. Opinions are generally expressed on fairly narrow and specific points, and a number of expressed opinions may allow us to infer the existence of an underlying, more general attitude.[1]

As far as the adjective *public* is concerned, it indicates the supposed common interests and objectives of all or at least a majority of the people in a political unit, such as public agencies, public welfare, public interest, public work, public building, public domains, public services, etc. In this usage *the public* refers to the membership of the political unit. It is congruent with an amorphous social structure whose members share a community of interest that has been produced by impersonal communication and contact. One may belong to as many publics as one has interests. Furthermore, a public may or may not coincide with physical, geographical, or political units.[2]

2. The roots of the concept of public opinion lie deep in the past. There was no explicit single formulation of it prior to the eighteenth century and no systematic treatment of it until the nineteenth, but in earlier writings one finds a foreshowing of, and approximation to, modern theorising about public opinion. The Greeks launched the endeavour. In his *Politeia,* Aristotle appraised the political competence of the masses in postive terms. The principle that the multitude should be supreme contains "an element of truth. Hence, the many are better judges...for some understand one part and some another; and among them they understand the whole."

Certain phrases and ideas in the political and juristic vocabulary of the Romans and in the writings of the medieval period are likewise related to some aspects of the modern concept of public opinion. Cic-

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[1] *A Dictionary of the Social Sciences*, J. Gould and W. L. Kolb (eds.) (The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, The Free Press, 1964), p. 477.
[2] *Op. cit.,* pp. 557-558.

ero – like many other Romans of the classical period – had little respect for the *vulgus*. In his oration on behalf of Quintus Roscius we find the line: *Sic est vulgus: ex veritate pauca, ex opinione multa aestimat*. The Romans did not use the words "public opinion" but the concept was so familiar to them that they worked with it as though it was something which was self-evident. Separate aspects of public opinion appear in classical terms: *fama, public reputatio, rumor, vox populi, consensus gentium*, the latter as a basis of legal and political sovereignty. Of medieval origin is the well known saying *Vox populi, vox Dei*.

The idea that opinions are the origin of authority was a product of the post-Renaissance secularisation of the state voiced by Machiavelli in the sixteenth century. In his *Discorsi* he wrote as follows: "Not without reason is the voice of the people compared to the voice of God". This was quoted approvingly during the years which followed.

Tributes to the power of opinion became increasingly frequent in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Pascal hailed opinion as "the Queen of the World". Hobbes declared that "they say truly and properly that the world is governed by opinion". Locke distinguished three classes of laws: divine law, civil law and "the law of opinion or reputation". And Hume argued that "all governments, however despotic, are based upon opinion".[3]

3. A real breakthrough came with Rousseau. He applied the theory of popular infallibility to the state itself. In his first discussion of the *volonté générale* he came to the conclusion that "the most general will is also the most just" and that the voice of the people is the voice of God. In his most influential work *Du contrat social* (1762) he pays tribute to the power of opnion. He wrote: "Indeed, whatever the form of government, the most fundamental of all laws is that of opinion. Political, civil and criminal laws are based upon it". In his *Lettre à M.*

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[3] What is said above on the concept of the public opinion as understood before Rousseau's contribution is based on the UNESCO Dictionary, p. 563, and on: Paul A. Palmer, 'The Concept of Public Opinion in Political Theory', in: B. Berelson and M. Janovitz (eds), *Reader in Public Opinion and Communication* (Glencoe Ill., The Free Press), pp. 3-5.

d'Alembert (1762) he proclaims the key words: "the government can influence morals (moeurs) only through public opinion" (*l'opinion publique*). Thus he laid the basis for further development of the concept. In his last important political treatise, *Considerations sur le gouvernement de Pologne* (1772), he writes: "Whoever makes it his business to give laws to a people must know how to sway opinions and through them govern the passions of men".[4]

It was also at the time of the tumultuous French revolution that the concept of public opinion – which was previously rather esoteric, confined to the learned circles, and which performed the role of a catchword or slogan – was given thorough intellectual treatment.

This was due to a large extent to a Genevan, Jacques Necker, the finance minister to Louis XVI. In his writings he discussed in detail the nature and significance of public opinion as a factor in statecraft. Public opinion, he argued, strengthens or weakens all human institutions. Only fools, pure theorists or apprentices in moral philosophy fail to take public opinion into account in their political undertakings. Most foreigners have difficulty in understanding the nature of an *invisible force* (my italics) which, without treasures, without bodyguards, and without any army, gives laws to the city, to the court, and even to the palaces of the king. Public opinion is at once stronger and more enlightened than the law. It may be regarded as a *tribunal* (my italics) before which all statesmen must be accountable, and must be enlightened by publicity if its judgements are to be correct. It is the principal *safeguard* (my italics) against the abuse of political authority.

4. It was at this juncture of history that two momentous events occurred which determined the course of democracy in the years to come. They were: the American Declaration of Independence (1776) and the French Declaration of the Rughts of Man (1788). According to G. Sartori,[5] the concept of the public opinion was of prime importance in both. There was a basic difference between the two events. The

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[4] Palmer, *op. cit.* pp. 4-5.
[5] See his *The Theory of Democracy Revisited* (Chatman House, 1987), p. 74.

American Declaration of Independence was not a revolution in the strict sense: it was secession. The basic innovation (not the only one, though) was the replacement of a monarch, to whom a special religious and symbolic significance was attached, by the head of a constitutional republic. In France, however, it was a fully-fledged revolution, i.e., a complete upheaval of the existing political and social system. During this tumultuous era the role of what was called "public opinion" cannot be overrated. It was a potent social and political force. "Queen of the World", indeed, it brought on the revolution, made and unmade statesmen, and was a check on the holders of power.

5. What follows is a brief account of the views on the subject expressed by noted philosophical, political and legal thinkers of the nineteenth century.

The influence of the French revolution is visible very early in German thought. The phrase "*öffentliche Meinung*" appears in many publications. Mention should be made of: C. M. Wieland, called the "German Voltaire", who speaks of it as "an opinion that without being noticed takes possession of most heads"; J. Fries, who in public opinion sees the basis of the rule of law within the state; F. Ancillon, who considers public opinion as "the principal power in the political world"; and C. von Gersdorf, who, in *Über den Begriff und das Wesen der öffentlichen Meinung* (1846), provides a very detailed analysis of public opinion during the first half of the nineteenth century by tracing, among other things, its relation to the sovereignty of law.

Of British thinkers at the early stage of the inquiry about the nature of the new concept one should mention especially J. Bentham (1748-1832). Throughout his writings he insisted on the importance of public opinion as an instrument of social control. In his political treatises, compiled after 1814, he regarded the free expression of public opinion as the chief safeguard against *misrule* (my italics) and as the characteristic mark of a democratic state. He considered to the full the relation between public opinion and legislation. "Public opinion", he stated by way of definition, "may be considered as a system of law emanating from the body of the people". Lastly, he recognised in the newly estab-

lished newspaper press the most important factor there was in the formation and expression of public opinion.[6]

6. The fully-fledged treatment of the nature as well as the role played by public opinion in the democratic process started with two towering figures of the nineteenth century, Alexis de Tocqueville and John Stuart Mill. Their thinking has served ever since as a point of departure and stimulus for further discussion on the subject.

De Tocqueville achieved fame with his profound and prophetic study *De la démocratie en Amérique* (1835-1840). He was fascinated by the problem of power in the modern democratic state as it presented itself "on the other side of the Ocean". Distinction between authority and power is fundamental in de Tocqueville, authority being the inner nature of association, rooted in function and allegiance, while power is coercion, generally with the implication of externally applied force.

As regards the main issue under discussion, de Tocqueville's dominating interest in the role of public opinion as an important factor in the functioning of modern democracy followed from his view that the focus of democratic power is to be found in mass majorities. To his mind, the sway of public opinion could be stifling to individuality. He spoke of "the tyranny of the majority".

Robert A. Nisbet, in his analysis of deTocqueville's thought, wrote the following on the subject: "It does not seem to have occurred to him that public opinion is something that can be manufactured as well by minority pressure groups. He conceived of it as a more or less direct emanation from the political masses. But if he did not explore its sources and variable expressions, he nevertheless correctly identified it as a new and powerful force in the modern state, one henceforth crucial to the legitimacy of governments. Equally important, Tocqueville, in contrast to most political conservatives of his day, feared not the instability but stability of public opinion in democracy, a stability so great, in his view, that not only political revolution but even intellectual innovation would become increasingly unlikely."[7]

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[6] Palmer, *op. cit.* pp. 7-10.
[7] From the entry on Tocqueville Alexis, de, *International Encyclopedia*, pp. 91-92.

7. Let us turn now to John Stuart Mill (1806-73), one of the most representative and versatile British thinkers of the nineteenth century. In his widely acclaimed *Considerations on Representative Government* (1861) he gave a brilliant exposition of what is meant by representative government, in conjunction with the place and role played in it by public opinion, it may be added. In Chapter II, *The Criterion of a Good Government*, he maintains that government improves in quality "where the officers of government, themselves persons of superior virtue and intellect, are surrounded by the atmosphere of a virtuous and enlightened public opinion."[8] We find the problem of public opinion again in Chapter V: *The Proper Function of Representative Bodies.* He writes: "Instead of the function of governing, for which it is clearly unfit, the proper office of a representative assembly is to watch and control government" and that a representative assembly is "the nation's Committee of Grievances, and its Congress of Opinions, an arena in which not only the general opinion of the nation, but that every section of it can produce itself in full light and challenge discussion; where every person in the country may count upon finding somebody who speaks his mind."[9]

It is not surprising that J.S. Mill in his treatise on R*epresentative Government* also tackled the intricate problem of the majority versus the minority. In Chapter VII, *Of True and False Democracy; Representation of All, and Representation of the Majority,* he wrote, *inter alia*: "that the minority must yield to majority, the smaller number to the greater, is a familiar idea. But does it follow that the minority should have no representatives at all? Because the majority ought to prevail over the minority, must the majority have all the votes, the minority none? Is it necessary that the minority should not even be heard?...In a really equal democracy, every or any section would be represented, not disproportionately, but proportionately".[10]

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[8] The selections taken from J. S. Mill's *Considerations on the Representative Government*, 1861, in: *Introduction to Contemporary Civilisation in the West*, p. 441.
[9] *Op. cit.*, p. 444.
[10] *Op. cit.*, pp. 448-9.

8. The appearance and development of the concept of public opinion at the end of the eighteenth century and throughout the nineteenth century was aptly summarised by George C. Thompson.[11] In his considerations on the questions under discussion he stated, first, that the notion "public opinion" is really nothing but a metaphor, for thought is an attribute of a single mind, and "the public" is an aggregate of many minds. Second, that a few men who hold a definite opinion earnestly and on rational grounds, in other words an opinion that rests on some basis of evidence, will outweigh a greater number who merely entertain a slight preference which they cannot explain because it is something vague and general. Third, speaking more generally, there are four principal characteristics which, it seems, should be taken into account in the evaluation of public opinion: – diffusion, persistence, intensity and reasonableness. Fourth, it may be said that in the last analysis all political opinions (except those that are the outcome of mere self-interest) must ultimately rest upon instincts; that is to say, upon moral sentiments of approval or reprobation, and upon emotional proclivities of like or dislike. This kind of public opinion he suggested should be seen as bias.

9. The process of tracing the development of the nature of public opinion had hitherto been based on the scholarly effort of philosophers and political theorists. In the latter part of the nineteenth century the contribution of the newly established social science disciplines, such as sociology and social psychology, became more and more important.

10. The new approach centred on the study of non-rational, emotional factors at work in the formation and expression of public opinion. Gustave Le Bon (1841-1931) demonstrated this with great vigour. He wrote: "The century we enter now will be a true era of the crowd. The blind force of numbers becomes the only philosophy of history. Crowd psychology reveals to what extent law and institutions are helpless in the face of their impulsiveness, and how unable are crowds to

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[11] It appeared originally in the book *Public Opinion and Lord Beaconsfield* (1886); repr. in: *Public Opinion and Communication*, pp. 14-18.

have whatever opinions have not been suggested."[12] Le Bon did not write of the crowd in the colloquial sense but of organised crowds – in other words, of crowds in a psychological sense – which meant that a grouping of people subjected to general suggestion led to the creation of a kind of "soul".

11. Gabriel Tarde (1843-1904) was more cautious and suggested that the word "crowd" should only be used to denote the situation of a physical proximity of a certain number of individuals.[13] More importantly, he postulated creating a psychology of the *public*, an entity he considered to be much more characteristic of the community before modern times. According to Tarde the public was characterised by spatial distribution which was always connected by a spiritual proximity which grows with the perfecting of the means of opinion exchange. Writing about "suggesting at a distance", Tarde expressed much that connected him to American pragmatists with their stress on the problems of communication. It was also Tarde who with keen insight insisted on the importance of the intensity of belief as a factor in the spread of opinions. One man – he maintained – who holds his belief tenaciously counts for as much as several men who hold theirs weekly. This is, perhaps, true of moral questions.

12. So much for the ninteenth century which, historically speaking, lasted until World War One. What appeared in the twentieth century was the scholarly, modern study of public opinion based on the analyses of sociologists, social psychologists, legal and political scientists, and demographers. Research activity in the study of public opinion expanded tremendously. New and increasing numbers of research techniques, such as the statistical analysis of opinion, news and attitudes by means of polls and questionnaires, were applied.

It was Bernard Berelson who distinguished several characteristics which public opinion research did not have at the beginning. It was (a) primarily American; (b) academic; (3) the result of team research; (d)

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[12] *Psychologie des foules* (1985).
[13] *L'opinion et la foule* (1901).

topical, empirical, and limited rather than broadly theoretical; (e) technical; (f) quantitative; (g) specialised; and (h) focused on public opinion *per se* rather than on some larger subject.[14]

Public opinion is a multi-faceted phenomenon. Efforts to define the term precisely have led to such expressions of frustration as: "Public opinion is not the name of something, but a classification of a number of somethings".[15] Yet, despite the differences in definitions, students of public opinion generally agree at least that it is "a collection of individual opinions on an issue of public interest, and they usually note that these opinions can exercise influence over individual behaviour, group behaviour, and government policy".[16]

13. What follows is a concise examination of internal relationships among individual opinions that make up public opinion on an issue. One may say right away that public opinion seems to possess qualities that make it something more than a sum of individual opinions on an issue. It is presumed to have a force and vitality unconnected with any specific individual.

14. This was emphasised by Ferdinand Tönnies (1864-1920) who observed that "whatever may come to be considered a public opinion, it confronts the individual with an opinion which is in part an extraneous power";[17] members of a community in their behaviour are directed by faith, and members of a society by public opinion.

15. Another eminent sociologist of this period, Charles H. Cooley (1864-1929), in tune with American political tradition and his own philosophy, did not contrast society with the state, but saw in society's development a phase of the spread of public opinion whose other aspects included the growth of voluntary associations, trade unions, corporations, clubs, fraternities, etc. He described public opinion as no mere aggregate of separate individual judgements, but an organisation, a co-operative product of communication and reciprocal influence.

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[14] 'The Study of Public Opinion', in: L. D. White (ed), *The State of Social Sciences* (1956).
[15] Harwood L. Childs, *Public Opinion. Nature, Formation and Role* (1965), p. 12.
[16] Based on: W. Phillips Davison, Public Opinion, in: *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, vol. 13 (1968).
[17] *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* (1887).

16. Ideas such as these resulted later on in the abandonment of the search for an entity or content labelled "public opinion" that can be discovered and then analysed; emphasis was placed instead on the study of multi-individual situations and of the relationships among the opinions held by various people in these situations.[18]

If public opinion is viewed as a species of organisation or as a bundle of relationships, questions arise as to what the nature of these relationships is, how they are formed, how they persist and why they dissolve.

17. The formation of public opinion in a given grouping of people occurs through the give and take of discussion. Ordinarily, the public is made up of interest groups and more detached and disinterested spectator-like bodies. The issue that creates a public opinion is usually set by contending interest groups. A given public opinion is likely to be anywhere between a highly emotional and prejudiced point of view, and an intelligent and informed opinion. The net result of the interplay of these two groups may well be a biased, prejudiced opinion about the matter in question. Walter Lippman,[19] while exploring the psychological process of opinion formation, introduced into the social sciences the term *stereotype* to refer to preconceived ideas or beliefs about the attributes of the external world (he wrote of "pictures in our heads").

In sociology, after the appearance of Lippman's study, a *stereotype* denoted "a belief which is not held as an hypothesis buttressed by evidence but is rather mistaken in whole or in part for an established fact".[20] The term was further developed by social psychology, where stereotypes are as a rule referred to as the cognitive component of one particular attitude – prejudice.

18. We now turn to the second area, i.e. the political role of public opinion. One is concerned here not with the "causes" of opinion but with its consequences. Our central consideration in this area is the ways

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[18] Floyd H. Allport, 'Towards a Science of Public Opinion', *Public Opinion Quarterly* (1937), p. 23.
[19] *Public Opinion* (1922).
[20] *A Dictionary of the Social Sciences*, p. 694.

in which public opinion is, or should be, applied in the determination of public policy.

One may safely say that the constantly increasing use of the term over the past two hundred years or so testifies to its utility. This is so because in the democratic process public opinion assumes a number of roles according to the need in question. So much so that it may well be a sanction (legitimising symbol), an instrument (data), and a generative force (directive and limit).

Within the confines of public opinion one can distinguish two categories of statements: (i) those of preference, which include expressions of individual feeling, conviction, and value; and (ii) those of fact, which purport to describe transpersonal reality in objective terms of verifiable evidence. Both are recognised as expressing controversial ideas, and hence are appropriate for discussion. It may well lead to agreement and the settlement of differences of opinion.

In a nutshell, public opinion to be truly worthy of the name, to be the proper motive force in a democracy, must be really public; and popular government is based upon the reception of a public opinion of that kind. In order for it to be public a majority is not enough, and unanimity is not required, but the opinion must be such that while the minority may not share it, they are bound by conviction, not by fear, to accept it; and if democracy is complete the submission must be given ungrudgingly.

19. An essential difference between government by public opinion as thus defined and by the bare will of a selfish majority is well expressed by President Hadley. After saying that laws imposed by a majority on a reluctant minority are commonly inoperative, he adds: "it cannot be too often repeated that those opinions which a man is prepared to maintain at another's cost, but not of his own, count for little in forming the general sentiment of a community, or in producing any effective public movement".[21]

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[21] A. Lawrence Lowell, 'The Nature of Public Opinion', in *Public Opinion and Popular Government* (1913); repr. in *Reader in Public Opinion and Communication*, p. 27.

Not ignoring for a single moment the need for a sophisticated approach to the problems of the nature and functioning of public opinion, one would be inclined to lean towards praxis, namely, to state that a consensus, or compromise, is feasible; that in democracy, particularly during some historical events, there are highly influential movements which stagger the imagination. We live in such a period.

20. The issue has been comprehensively treated by Giovanni Sartori. "Elections are a means of achieving the goal which is 'a government of opinions', that is a government susceptible to public opinion and responsible to it....One might ask whether there exists a reason for using the word (public) *opinion* instead of some other notion. There is another question – in what sense can the given opinion be considered as *public*? Only at this moment can we judge whether an opinion spread publicly is *free*; and to what extent and in what sense. What is more, the concept 'a government of opinions' refers to the concept of a 'government based on consent'...The choice of the term 'opinion' is very interesting. In its basic meaning an opinion is called public not only because it is spread among the public, but also because it refers to 'public things', to *res publica*...Public opinion is first and foremost a political concept. Opinion about public matters serves, and has to serve, the provision of information on public matters. In general terms, public opinion can be defined as follows: a community or a multitude of communities, whose scattered states of mind (opinions) enter into mutual interaction with the horde of information on the state of *res publica*. Naturally, the state of the mind, or opinion, contains various ingredients: needs, desires, preferences, attitudes, a general system of beliefs".[22]

21. What follows is an attempt to illustrate the significance of a nexus which exists between public opinion and social movements. This topic seems to come within the purview of the Academy's current inquiry, i.e. democracy itself.

The term "social movement" denotes a mass striving towards the realisation of social, economic or cultural goals which arises from some

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[22] G. Sartori, *The Theory of Democracy Revisited* (1987), pp. 116-117.

idea (or a group of ideas). As a mass movement it has an organisational framework, leadership and a programme. It reflects aspirations of large sections of the society. It can represent the interests of a group or class, but it can just as well be concerned with problems of fundamental importance to the whole community (e.g. a nation).

22. I propose here to examine at some length the experience of Solidarity in Poland in 1980. Originally a trade union, it soon became a mass social movement fighting for freedom, the rule of law, and democracy, and against authoritarian, monocentric Communist rule, with the nation's independence as its ultimate goal.

Who would have imagined at that time that this event would have led to something that staggers the imagination, namely the "*annus mirabilis*" of 1989. The roots of this event lie very deep. They go back to the Yalta agreement of 1945 by which many countries of Central and Eastern Europe found themselves under the Communist yoke. Yet almost from the beginning the fight against Communism began. Most of the "captive" nations had always been part of Western civilisation in cultural and historical terms. The milestones of the long march towards freedom and democracy were: the Berlin upheaval of 1953, the Poznan workers' strike of 1956, the Budapest uprising of the same year, the Prague Spring of 1968, the wave of strikes in Poland in 1970 and again in 1976, and then – what brought about the end of Communism – the foundation of Solidarity in 1980.

23. The strike of Polish workers started in August 1980 at the Lenin Shipyard in Gdansk. The Communist regime, bearing in mind the bloodshed of the strikes of 1970 and aware of the economic collapse of the country, offered to negotiate. The result was the creation of the first labour organisation inside the Soviet bloc to challenge head on the Communists' claim to represent the proletariat. In no time at all Solidarity embraced 10 million people in a country of 33 million. Rousseau's maxim of *volonté générale* was thus evoked after two hundred years, but in a totally different form. What was most characteristic about the Solidarity revolution was its complete lack of violence. It was a historical contradiction in terms: a "peaceful revolution". There were no Bastilles stormed, no guillotines erected, no panes of glass broken.

The phenomenon of non-violence was to be found later on in the history of all the democratic oppositions of East Central Europe throughout the 1980s, leading to the "*annus mirabilis*". Partly it was pragmatic: the other side had all the weapons. But it was also ethical. It was a statement about how things should be. It was not only a peaceful revolution but also a compromise revolution. It showed respect for the rule of law and even a degree of forgiveness for those who had abused power. It was in the tradition of Gandhi and Martin Luther King.

The main and leading grouping consisted of industrial workers, with a charismatic leader Lech Walensa at the helm. But practically all social strata were involved, a good example of this being the *entente cordiale* between the workers and the intelligentsia. Inside Solidarity there were also many members of the Communist Party. The membership of this last was dwindling – from about 3 million to 2 million or so later on. Actually, this process had started earlier, in the late 1960s, coupled with the erosion of the Marxist-Leninist ideology. Solidarity, in fact, was born in a post-communist society.

The central agent in creating this condition was the Catholic Church. The situation in Poland was a result of the interplay of challenge and response (to use Toynbee's phrase): the challenge posed by the Communist state and the response given by the Church. All the efforts of the state – equipped with the whole armoury of "rich means" – proved futile. The history of Poland suggests that national solidarity – a duty imposed and a right to be claimed – patriotism and religion, in combination, are more important influences than class conflict. The cultural experience of Poland has been penetrated deeply by the Christian vision of man – man who, to use the words of Cardinal Karol Wojtya (*Osoba i czyn* – (Person and Deed) 1969) "acts together with others".

Timothy Garton Ash, one of the best analysts of the situation in this part of Europe, wrote: "If I were forced to name a single date for the "beginning of the end" of this inner history of Eastern Europe, it would be June 1979. The judgement may be thought excessively Polonocentric, but I do believe that the Pope's first pilgrimage to Poland was the turning point...The Pope's visit was followed, just over a year later, by

the birth of Solidarity and without the Pope's visit it is doubtful that there would have been a Solidarity".[23]

In December 1981, Solidarity announced a referendum which would be held in February 1982. People were to be asked one question: "Is the Communist Party able to represent the political interests of Polish society?" It was in direct response to this dagger, pointed at the very heart of the Communist system, that martial law was declared.

The "S" movement was crushed in the short term, but a new pattern of political behaviour prevailed. After seven years of the unsuccessful employment of counter-revolutionary force there took place the round table talks of early 1989, and the first (partly) free elections in June 1989. These were partially democratic for the Sejm (the Lower House) (due to the "contract" made with the ruling Communist Party) and fully democratic for the Senate. Solidarity candidates obtained about 80% of the vote. In the Senate, where the principle was that of the winner takes all, the "S" candidates gained 99% of the seats. There could hardly be a more convincing proof of public opinion being a motive force in the democratic process.

26. Some time during this period one basic notion for the functioning of democracy emerged in the region – that of civic society. Strangely enough, in the form of Solidarity this notion appeared and took shape spontaneously within the monocentric Communist system. People had had enough of being mere components in a deliberately atomised society. Almost innately, citizens' committees came into being – one around Lech Walensa in 1987; local citizens' committees which were responsible for the electoral campaign in 1989; and as a result of these very special elections, the Citizens' Parliamentary Club. Such developments were accompanied by the Civic Forum in Czechoslovakia, the Civic Committee in Hungary, and Bürgerinitiativen in East Germany.

Perhaps the most remarkable fact was that the Communist Party accepted its defeat. By the same token it was also accepted by the Rus-

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[23] 'Eastern Europe. The Year of the Truth', *New York Review of Books*, 15 February 1990.

sians. For the other "captive" nations, a completely new pluralistic
political constellation emerged from the Polish June elections. In these
countries the changes proceeded by leaps and bounds. The Iron Cur-
tain was being dismantled by the Hungarians, the East Germans, the
Czechs and the Bulgarians, the only exception being Romania, which
witnessed bloodshed. The Berlin Wall, a symbol of divided Europe,
fell. The temporary epigram had it about right: "in the surge toward
freedom, Poland took 10 years, Hungary 10 months, East Germany 10
days and Romania 10 hours".[24] If one adds to this the collapse of the
Soviet Union, it had become evident that Communism in general was
coming to its end. In the final analysis, the progress of freedom had
triumphed over Marxism, with its legacy of war, revolution and totali-
tarian oppression.

27. The "*annus mirabilis*" of 1989 contributed to Europe as a whole
– from the Atlantic to the Urals – becoming a democratic continent.
The emergence of the pan-European democratic space may well have a
bearing on the future course of events far beyond the confines of this
continent. Democracy was born in Europe and democratic ideals are
an essential part of what is called the European heritage. Never fully
attained, often betrayed, less often practised than preached, these ide-
als are what goaded European man into greatness. They still constitute
a foundation on which the further growth of European civilisation can
be built.

II

1. We now turn to the second basic subject of this paper, namely
the *media* – a plural form of the Latin *medium*, i.e. that by which *some-
thing is done*. In the social sciences the plural denomination has pre-
vailed. This is rather justified if one takes into account the tremendous
– and growing – number of instruments connected with mass com-

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[24] *Time*, winter 1996, 'Europe. 50 Remarkable Years'.

munication. The term *media* denotes a mechanism of impersonal communication between the speaker and the audience. As a rule, it excludes face-to-face contact. Oddly enough, due to a sort of process of reduction, the usage *media* has prevailed. In other words, it is a means which has become an end in its own right.

When one speaks of the media, one has, in fact, in mind the media of mass communication. Let us not forget that since time immemorial they have been identified with speech. According to E. Sapir (*Communication*, 1931) "language is the most explicit type of communicative behavior that we know of. It need not here be defined beyond pointing out that it consists in every case known to us of an absolutely complete referential apparatus of phonetic symbols which have the property of locating every known social referent, including all the recognised data of perception which the society that it serves carries in tradition. Language is the most communicative process par excellence in every known society".[25] It retains its role, of course, in face-to-face contact.

2. However, in the era of the media the term "communication" has taken on a different character. It includes five fundamental factors: /a/ an initiator, /b/ a recipient, /c/ a mode or vehicle, /d/ a message, /e/ an effect. Thus in its most general form, *communication* denotes a process in which an initiator emits or sends a message via some vehicle to some recipient and produces an effect. Most definitions also include the idea of interaction in which the initiator is simultaneously or successively a recipient and the recipient simultaneously an initiator.

In most definitions the initiator is an organism, as is the recipient. In recent work in communication engineering the initiator or the recipient may also be a physical system other than an organism.[26]

As far as the notion "mass" is concerned, one has in mind a large audience. Mass communication, therefore, is equivalent to imparting information to, and influencing the ideas of, large numbers of people. Ours is indeed a mass society. With six billion people in the world today, this seems a legitimate affirmation.

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[25] *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences,* vol. IV (New York, 1931).
[26] *A Dictionary of the Social Sciences*, p. 111.

Before moving to what is our main concern, i.e. the mass media, let me deal briefly with /i/ mass society and /ii/ mass culture. The first term denotes a society which is a *mass* and /or taken to be characterised in some respects by the *mass* or the *masses*. Such a society is characterised variously by features of increased mobility and social differentiation, and the loss of traditional roots, values, or attachments. Usage of the term is normative and political as well as analytic.[27]

One would rather be inclined to put aside the pejorative use of the word *mass* which can be seen in the writings of J.O. Ortega y Gasset, K. Mannheim or R. Williams, and to stress what was written on the subject by, for instance, D. Bell,[28] who mentions as a feature of mass culture "mechanised /and/ bureaucratised society", or L. Wirth, who adds the dimension of democracy and complexity: "mass societies are the product of the division of labour, of mass communication and more or less democratically achieved consensus".[29]

Finally, a word about *mass culture*, which "denotes, broadly, the cultural correlates of mass society, especially characteristics of modern urban and industrial civilization...the implication being that the *masses* consume or enjoy *culture* which differs significantly from that enjoyed, either now or in the past, by *elite* elements in social structure; that such differences are differences both of content and quality; that *mass cultural* objects are transmitted and diffused through the modern *mass media of communication*".[30]

In fact, one of the most striking features of post-industrial civilisation is the mass character of phenomena and processes. It is first and foremost the result of a "demographic explosion". There are mass communities, mass concentrations of people, mass needs and mass means of satisfying them. The mass satisfaction of needs is not only the result of the absolute increase in the population, but also of increasing social

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[27] *A Dictionary of the Social Sciences*, p. 413.
[28] *The End of Ideology* (Glencoe Ill., 1969).
[29] 'Consensus and Mass Communication', *American Sociological Review*, 1948.
[30] *A Dictionary of the Social Sciences*, p. 411.

and political democratisation, another important feature – at the end of the second millennium – of "the age of democracy". Thanks to political processes all political strata have their say and play their part in the on-going events which occur, even those that were previously on the margins, so to speak, of social and economic life, that is to say, on the whole the most numerous groups. The constantly expanding system of social facilities provided by the state to the rich and even the poor is one expression of the truism that people are equal, that they do not differ in their needs, desires and aims, and in their rights in relation to the satisfaction of such elements.

3. What has been said so far can be considered as a sort of preparation of the ground for the issue under consideration, i.e. the mass media.

Let me proceed in a scholarly manner by presenting a brief definition of the subject under consideration. "Mass media (broadly defined in a way which does not specify the audience's precise characteristics) are all the impersonal means of communication by which visual and/or auditory messages are transmitted directly to audiences. Included among the mass media are television, radio, motion pictures, newspapers, magazines, books and billboards. In must be kept in mind, however, that there are variations among mass media and that radio, motion pictures, television, and the popular press are likely to have larger and more heterogeneous audience".[31]

Two features are cited in definition, one relating to the technical means of transmission and the other to the audience. The first feature seems adequate in itself. The term denotes all mass media of communication in which a mechanism of impersonal reproduction intervenes between the speaker and the audience. With regard to the audience that receives communication, the range of the mass media is variously delineated. It is implied that a large audience is necessary for the proper usage of mass media. The mass media may (and in fact they do on many occasions) reach millions of people. The impact can be of unparalleled significance. (Let us recall two momentous events of the twenti-

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[31] *A Dictionary of the Social Sciences*, pp. 412-413.

eth century: Winston Churchill's radio broadcast to the British people on 4 June 1940, which contained the crucial words: "we shall never surrender", and what John F. Kennedy said on TV in his inaugural address: "ask not what your country can do for you: ask what you can do for your country").

4. What marks out this century, what defines it uniquely, is the exponential growth of the sciences. To say that sciences and the technologies they engender have changed the world is to state the obvious, although we often forget the true dimensions of the change. More subtly, the sciences have become a critical social force, fundamentally transforming the way we perceive the world, the nature of the questions we ask, and the expectations we have.

Electronic technologies characterised by instruments and circuits in which the flow is controlled and utilised, such as the transistor microchip or the electron tube, have become the forward thrust at the turn of the second and third millennia. This is to be seen in the new development they are catalysing; in the form of organisation they create; in the way they are taking control of older mechanised technologies (as in the case of automated factories); and in the modes of thought and way of life they engender.

The difference between mechanical and electronic media can be seen most sharply in the purposes the technologies serve. Three types of technological environment can be perceived: those relating to goods (production facilities, factories, etc); those relating to man (transportation, architecture, etc); and those that serve information (the communications media).

From this perspective it becomes apparent that the major impact of most mechanised technologies has been felt most critically in the area of goods and people. The steamship and the locomotive speeded up the movement of merchandise and increased its availability – spurring further industry and the growth of cities. The aeroplane and the automobile permitted new kinds of mobility for man, enabling him to move faster, and creating, in turn, new communities and relationships between distant places.

To some extent the new electronic technologies resemble the older steam-based technologies. But the crucial difference in electronic technologies – and particularly the media – is twofold: a drastic new form of energy and a different purpose within most of the technologies, namely, information movement and control.

Electricity is mobile energy. Unlike steam, wind, or waterpower, it can be carried along wires to any distance. And while it has replaced older sources of energy – as in the case of electrical trains – its most striking uses have not been merely as energy, but as the basis of new methods of communication and information control, such as the telegraph, the telephone, radio, television, and computers.

5. The distinction between a machine-dominated, or mechanistic interpretation of technology, and an information-control interpretation leads to major new considerations. The most important of these is the way in which one conceives technology in relation to man.

The rationalists of the eighteenth century used a machine as a model by which they attempted to understand the universe and man: the whole of nature was seen as a mighty clockwork. In the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries the machine was sometimes interpreted as a principle of its own opposed to man – degrading and dehumanising him. Charles Chaplin's *Modern Times* (1934) depicts a helpless worker on an assembly line.

Briefly, mechanical and electronic technologies can be characterised as follows: from interchangeable parts to integrated circuits, from the consumption of natural energy sources to new routes for tapping and channelling energies, from the bit-by-bit method of mechanisation to the all-at-once method of electronic energy. In short, electronic instruments are not machines, and the electronic age is not the machine age.

H. A. Innis in his *The Bias of Communication* (Toronto, 1951) emphasised how the media of mass communication transform the monopolies of knowledge and in the final analysis become a power within a culture. The media shape and influence information and ultimately culture (in the broadest sense of the word) – democracy as a political system being an inseparable part of it. He discerned in radio, film, and

television a return to oral media, something that could mean vitality in culture along the lines of the Greeks who successfully merged an oral tradition with a written alphabet. An oral tradition is interpersonal rather than impersonal. What is most important, however, is the contact that the oral tradition has with the organic. If the oral bias is completely lost, man becomes totally dependent on media which are external external to him. "Media", he concluded, "can liberate or confine man; just knowing that may one day make the difference".

His follower, M. McLuhan, in *Understanding Media* (1964), explored the mental and social repercussions of the electronic media. His study is structured on the premise that television represents for his (and, if I may be personal, also for my) age and for the near future roughly what the printing press represented for the previous four hundred years. The phrases "before television" and "after television" run like two motifs through the pages of his work. According to McLuhan we do not watch television; we reach out and touch it. He sees television as the apex and apotheosis of the electronic revolution. In many contexts, the terms television and electronic media have become inseparable.[32]

6. Let us turn now to the areas of media which are valid to the central issue – that is, democracy. We begin with the notion of the *common good* (social interest) in the media. They are both products and a reflection of the history of the society. Despite similarities between societies, in terms of their origins, practice and conventions, the media are national institutions and are subject to political pressure and the social expectations of the public. They reflect, express, and often

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[32] In presenting the above I have drawn on the inspiring work by W. Kuhns, *The Post-industrial Prophets. Interpretations of Technology* (New York, 1971). Significantly, on the jacket of his book one can read the names of Lewis Mumford, Siegfried Giedion, Jacques Ellul, Harold A. Innis, Marshall McLuhan, Norbert Wiener, R. Buckminster Fuller. I wonder if one could add two more authors who may well be considered "prophets": Raymond Aron and his *Progress and Disillusion. The Dialectics of Modern Society* (New York, 1968), and Zbigniew Brzezinski, *La Révolution Technétronique* (Paris, 1971), a translation of his original publication *Between Two Ages* (New York, 1970). With regard to the French edition, it seems that it was there that the term "*technétronique*" (a combination of two crucial denominations, i.e. techné and electronics) first appeared.

actively serve, national interests in the form defined by other, more influential forces.

The media can be subject to extensive forms of legal and administrative control, protection or regulations of an often normative nature. Since the media can be very different, the medial system is not ruled by one clear set of norms, and the practices can differ as well.

The normative regulation of the media is based on the premise that they should serve the common good (social interest). In practice, this means that they are not seen as commercial companies like others of that kind because they ought to contribute to long-term social benefits, mainly in the cultural and political area. This aspect of their activity is approved of by the media when they proclaim their public mission, expecting legal and economic privileges in return.

Without resorting to the common good one cannot evaluate the activities of the media. The problem lies in the transition from the general notion of social interest to its interpretation in terms of the realities of particular media: it differs depending on whether one is dealing with telecommunications or public radio and television. For example, according to the Organisation for Economic and Cultural Development (OECD) report (1991), a telephone service should include: (1) general geographical availability; (2) general economic affordability; (3) general service of high quality; and (4) non-discriminatory tariffs. The first two elements – availability and affordability – are the most important, yet while one can easily imagine their realisation in telecommunication, it becomes much more difficult in the case of the crowded computer network (WWW – or the World Wide Web – is sometimes jokingly read out as World Wait Web, and with good reason). At this juncture McQuail[33] presents an idea of public service which would include: (1) general service; (2) variability; (3) editorial independence; (4) social responsibility and accountability; (5) cultural quality and identity; and (6) public financing and /or non-profitable activities.

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[33] D. Mc Quail, *Mass Communication Theory. An Introduction* (3rd. edition, London, 1994).

The functioning of the mass media is also evaluated in terms of the *social values and principles* which constitute a check on their trustworthiness. It is not easy to interpret them since one runs the risk of creating an illusion of an existing coherent, legally approved and scientific code of principles on the functioning of the media. But no such code exists – and if it did, it would contradict the principle of freedom of expression. Still, there do exist some socially approved principles and standards which allow us to differentiate between good and bad media. Commonly, they are as follows: social order and solidarity, cultural order and freedom, equality, variability and a high level of information.

The authorities and society expect public communication to uphold the existing social order. There are numerous visions of this order in democracy, but generally the media are expected to condemn conflict and violence, and to act in ways that strengthen the democratic state (e.g., acting for the good of the recipients, contributing to social integration, maintaining the prestige of the forces of law and order, observing the accepted moral standards of a given society, etc). As for social expectations regarding the quality of medial products, they should: (1) reflect the culture and language of the people they serve according to the latter's life experience; (2) perform an educational role and express all that is best in the cultural achievement of the nation; and (3) support originality and cultural creativity.[34]

In recent years the media have strengthened features which society deems inappropriate or even negative. This has led governments and international bodies, e.g. the Council of Europe, to introduce new legal regulations. These concern media monopolies that threaten the variability and independence of information and opinion, the development of scandalising and sensational forms of media, the growth of supra-national media that invade the cultural identity of other societies, aggression in the media which contributes to teenage violence, etc.

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[34] After D. Mc Quail, *op. cit.*, quoted in T. Goban-Klas, *Media i komunikowanie masowe. Teorie i analizy prasy, radia, telewizji i Internetu* (Warsaw, Krakow, 1999).

Freedom of the media lies at the heart of liberal doctrine and is formulated in all democratic constitutions. Yet its interpretation differs. Legally guaranteed and socially recognised, freedom of communication has a twofold dimension: it exists to ensure a wide range of social voices and to meet various social needs. Freedom of the media is advantageous for the functioning of social institutions since it guarantees the flow of reliable information and the presentation of various points of view. The media must not fear the rich and powerful, and should engage in controversial political debate. The media's right to be independent means the right to inform people about the emperor's clothes. Yet, freedom is a condition rather than a criterion of the functioning of the media. It is related to the right to free expression, but this requires the access of citizens to the media and the possibility of gaining different information from different public sources.

Another basic issue of the liberal doctrine on the media is the belief in the *separation of information from commentary*. The main task is objective reporting, with the recipient free to formulate judgements and to interpret. However, objectivity need not always be valuable, is not always achievable, and is not always necessary.

The variability of the media is the fundamental standard of the democratic media system since it upholds the normal cycle of change in society (change of the ruling elites, circulation of power, the balancing of influences). The more equal the system, the more diversified it is.

Yet another major aspect is the *social responsibility* of the media. According to McQuail,[35] the media should be true, precise, just, objective, and relevant; constitute a public forum for various ideas; be free and self-regulating; and should observe established ethical codes and professional standards.

7. At the end of the second millennium of the Christian era, societies everywhere around the world are being fundamentally changed by the emergence of a new paradigm based on information and communication technologies (ICT). Side by side with the microelectronics-based

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[35] D. McQuail, *op. cit.*, quoted in T. Goban-Klas, *op. cit.*

information technologies (microprocessors, computers, telecommuni-
cations, optoelectronics), we encounter genetic engineering, which ex-
tends the manipulation of information codes to the realm of living matter,
thus ushering in a fundamental biological revolution.

At the same time, a new communication system of a revolutionary
character with important consequences for man has emerged. This is
the *Internet,* which is on the way to becoming an essential communica-
tions channel which will characterise the world during the twenty-first
century. The speed of its diffusion is enormous. In late 1998 Internet
users numbered 130m in the world. Even more important is the growth
rate, estimated at about 100 per cent per year, reaching 500m users in
the early years of the twenty-first century.

The most important implication of this new instrument is that it
cannot be controlled, technically or politically, except by disconnecting
a communication system from the global network. Furthermore, by
linking up people with each other, the Internet bypasses the communi-
cation system established by the mass media. While the media are them-
selves fully present in the Internet, people can opt for their communi-
cation or for selected alternative sources of information and interac-
tion, thus escaping their dependence on the mass media.

A large share of Internet usage seems to happen in work situations
(either in the office or at the home work-desk), and reflects the profes-
sional and personal interests of the users. Networks developed for spe-
cific purposes, and even chat groups, are constructed around affinities,
shared values, and common interests.

Electronic communities emerge from existing social communities,
but they expand them, reinforce them, and ultimately may spur elec-
tronic communities that take on a life of their own. One can say that
sociability in the Internet is both weak and strong, depending on the
people and the contents of the relationship, and it is linked to non-
electronic communications of various levels of intensity.

What is most important – in view of the basic theme of our consid-
eration, i.e. democracy – is that social and political mobilisation through
the Internet is related to grass-roots organisation and to the exercise of

political democracy. Internet communication may in fact prove to be invaluable for the reconstruction of civic society in a world threatened by growing inequalities and political alienation as a consequence of the capture of powerful ICTs by those who still control society.[36] According to Castells, the crux of the matter is the emergence of a historically new *network society*. In addition to the term *information society*, Castells introduces the notion of *informational society* to emphasise that modern society bases itself on information, knowledge and technology as a means of producing and shaping the conditions of collective life. As a new form, this society is in statu nascendi.[37]

And yet, despite all the mind-boggling advantages of the Internet, there remains the disturbing thought that what it lacks is that element which is of most importance for the human condition, namely, face-to-face interaction.

8. Let me end the argument with a very brief and fragmentary presentation of the doctrine on the media of the Catholic Church. In particular since the mid-twentieth century, the Church has fully recognised the importance and meaning of the media and has developed its own doctrine: "In the media the Church finds a modern pulpit, through the media she can address the masses" (*Evangeli Nuntiandi* n. 45). In his manifesto on the World Mass Media Day (21.01.1986) John Paul II wrote: "The basic task of the Church is proclamation of the Scriptures...Also, today the Church wishes to submit the abundan t reality of the social mass media to the fundamental values aimed at defending the dignity of man...The Church expresses her joy at the existence of those means and the possibility of sharing the light of the Scriptures with all men...The Church would be guilty to the Lord if she failed to employ such powerful aid constantly perfected by the human mind".

Following Vatican Council II (1965) and its main document on the media, *Inter Mirifica*, the Church's teaching on the media was brought

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[36] I have drawn rather heavily from an article by M. Castells: 'The Social Implication of Information and Communication Technologies', in *World Social Science Report 1999* (UNESCO, 1999).
[37] M. Castells, *End of Millenium* (Oxford, 1998).

into being. The Church believes that man has the right to express and spread his opinions (John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*. n. 12 [1963]), but does not consider this right to be unlimited. It is constrained by the duty to diffuse true information and by the principles of the moral order. It is the responsibility of state authorities to ensure that the mass media are employed for the common good. The authorities should defend and protect the real and just freedom of information (*Inter Mirifica*, n. 12). John Paul II told the journalists that: "Thus, the specificity of the Christian's calling to shape reality by means of the mass media is the calling to bear witness to faith through the service to truth ...This does not mean a truth as a description of reality true in terms of the factual state, but a description of the complete reality of man in the perspective of the law revealed by God...This is of particular importance in the case of creators and workers within the mass media whose testimony to truth is connected with immense responsibility...Thus each of them "must be the man of truth". The attitude each of them takes towards truth ultimately defines his identity, and his professional value as well.

Aetatis Novae, a ministerial instruction on mass communication issued to mark the twentieth anniversary of *Communio et Progressio*, stresses that "the Church's commitment in the area of the mass media" is an activity which aims at the improvement of the media. The instruction does not suggest that the media should spread pornography or godlessness and does not propose limits on freedom, neither does it suggest organising the pressure of Catholic opinion to forbid the publication of magazines or programmes. The instruction speaks of the Christians' right to a "dialogue and information within the Church".

It is abundantly clear that His Holiness attaches great importance to the functioning and role of the media. His service expresses this to the utmost. The window from which each week at the Angelus he proclaims the entrance of God into history is a window of the world. St. Peter's Square, where all nations, races and languages meet, is a *lectorium* of the world.

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