

IPDC in Mexico: U.S.-UNESCO Turning Point?

Mexican and U.S. News Coverage of the IPDC at Acapulco

by Colleen Roach

Contrasts in coverage highlight the issue of free flow, as "the U.S. press continues to express concerns about government control, while the Third World has rallied behind a New International Information Order."

The second session of the Intergovernmental Council of the International Program for the Development of Communications (IPDC) was held in Acapulco, Mexico, from January 18 to 25, 1982. Formally established at the 21st General Conference of UNESCO in Belgrade in 1980, the IPDC's origins may be traced to the 1978 UNESCO General Conference, when the Ambassador of the U.S. delegation proposed a program of communications assistance to be jointly sponsored by UNESCO, the United Nations Development Program, the World Bank, and other international agencies (see 2, 4).

The second meeting received wide coverage in the Latin American press, particularly that of Mexico. In order to examine this coverage I collected 98 articles published by the Mexican press during the period of January 14 to February 8, 1982. The articles were taken from 12 dailies that reflect the major political trends of Mexican journalism: *Excelsior* (regarded as an "elite daily" akin to the *New York Times* and *Le Monde* and considered to be the nation's most prestigious newspaper; 15 articles), *Novedades* (very conservative; 2 articles), *El Universal*

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(conservative; 10 articles), *El Dia* (the country's leading liberal daily; 18 articles), *El Herald* (very conservative; 9 articles), *Uno Mas Uno* (a leftist paper staffed by many reporters and editors who had been purged from *Excelsior* in 1976; 24 articles), *Novedades de Acapulco* (conservative; 5 articles), *The News* (English-language affiliate of *Novedades*; 5 articles), *El Nacional* (official organ of the country's main political party, the "Institutional Revolutionary Party"; 2 articles), *El Sol de Mexico* (moderate-left; 2 articles), *El Sol de Acapulco* (owned by the same group as *El Sol de Mexico*; 4 articles), and *La Prensa* (a pro-labor liberal daily; 2 articles). With the exception of *Novedades de Acapulco* and *El Sol de Acapulco*, all the newspapers examined are leading dailies published in the capital. As can be seen from the above, the most extensive coverage of the conference was carried by the country's most prestigious paper (*Excelsior*) and by two liberal and leftist dailies (*El Dia* and *Uno Mas Uno*).¹

Given that the IPDC was originally a U.S. initiative, I will also briefly refer to the U.S. press coverage of this meeting, although the coverage was by no means as extensive as that provided by the Mexican newspapers. For the purposes of comparison I used a limited number of U.S. articles and dispatches which appear to be typical of U.S. press treatment of the IPDC. I examined four articles for the period January 20–26, 1982, in the *New York Times*, five AP dispatches, and five articles in the *International Herald Tribune* (which, although it is edited in Paris, is published with the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*, and has a decidedly U.S. perspective).

The evaluation of IPDC news coverage that follows is not a content analysis in the usual sense.² It is, however, systematic in treating dominant themes that recurred throughout the articles while at the same time providing contextual detail on particular newspapers or political overtones. If they are relevant, linguistic aspects of the coverage will also be pointed out. The specific items that I will quote were chosen because they are representative of the coverage of a certain newspaper. Exceptional or contradictory examples will also be noted. Finally,

¹ The political leanings of the various newspapers were gleaned from (5, pp. 180–185; 8, pp. 103–115) and a telephone conversation with the press attaché of the Mexican embassy in Paris.

² The scientific nature of any kind of content analysis can be called into question, and this is particularly so with respect to the extremely politicized question of news flow. Over the last few years there has been a plethora of "news flow" or "content analysis" studies demonstrating either that the Third World is being well served (both quantitatively and qualitatively) by the present news system, or that the complete opposite is true. The conclusions reached in such research appear to depend, to a great degree, on one's political convictions. Critical examination of such studies would ideally lead to a thorough reevaluation of the very concept of content analysis and its validity. For more on this issue see (1).

although this article focuses on the coverage of the IPDC session in Acapulco, the IPDC itself is also analyzed in relation to the evolution of the international communication debate.

Generally speaking, the IPDC meeting was given prominent and favorable coverage in the Mexican press.

Of the 98 articles examined, only 10 were extremely critical of the IPDC, UNESCO, or a particular aspect of the communications question. This coverage, however, was definitely presented with "national" hues, which were in evidence throughout the session. In the first days of the conference the key event highlighted in most of the Mexican press was the speech given by Luis Javier Solana, the Coordinator for Social Communication of the Mexican Presidency. Of a total of 22 items published on January 19, Solana's speech was referred to in 14 articles, most of which went into great detail. Toward the end of the meeting, the newspapers examined concentrated on Mexican projects and participation. This focus obviously served as a unifying force, as shown by the following headlines appearing in dailies of different political persuasions: "Mexican Project for Creation of ALASEI Agency Approved in Acapulco" (*El Dia*, January 22); "12 Mexican Projects Approved Unanimously in IPDC Meeting" (*El Universal*, January 22); "Communications Project for Third World Presented by Mexico" (*Excelsior*, January 23); and "Mexican Evaluation Proposal: New Telecommunications Systems" (*El Sol de Acapulco*, January 23).

With the exception of the 10 articles mentioned above (which will be examined below in more detail), it would seem that the coverage of the IPDC meeting offered by the various newspapers differed not so much in content but rather in the amount of coverage and the depth of news analysis. For example, conservative dailies such as *Novedades*, *The News*, and *El Nacional* generally limited their scope to the Acapulco meeting per se and its national ramifications. In contrast, coverage in more liberal and leftist newspapers such as *Excelsior*, *El Dia*, and *Uno Mas Uno*, in addition to providing more information on the IPDC session, also offered more analysis and background information on Third World demands in the field of information.

The Solana speech was remarkable for a number of reasons, but mainly because he addressed the overall issue of the function of communication in society. Not surprisingly, the point that received the most attention related to remarks on what has undoubtedly been the most controversial aspect of the debates on the New International Information Order: the role of the state in the area of communication. According to Solana, Mexico favors neither state intervention nor exclusive control by the private sector. In elaborating on this question,

Mexico's Minister of Communication held that the opposition between the state and the private sector was a "false dichotomy." He nonetheless expressed the opinion that the state had "a major responsibility in this area," and that it was entitled not only to create the proper conditions for exercising the "right to information" but also to be an active agent.³

Other points that were stressed in the coverage of this speech were the value of freedom of the press and freedom of expression, information viewed as a social right, the importance of society in the communication process, criticism of the current press campaigns against UNESCO, Mexican support for the IPDC, and the need for the democratization of communication in Mexico and for an authentic model of "social participation." Another key theme picked up by the press was the position that only internal, national changes in communication policies could provide a solid basis for the New International Information Order.

The Mexican press also devoted extensive and very favorable coverage to the Director-General of UNESCO, Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow.

A total of 25 articles referred to his opening address, press conference, or interviews. The statement made by M'Bow that received the most attention related to the role of the media in the process of development: "For the problems involved in the utilization of modern communication are not limited to the dissemination of news. These media exert an increasingly decisive influence on many aspects of the life of societies and can therefore constitute privileged instruments for the awakening of consciousness and for change." Reference was then made to the contribution of the media to cultural activities, literacy, education, and so on.

M'Bow's remarks on the "disproportion between the program's [IPDC] own resources and additional resources made available for a particular project," an unmistakable reference to U.S. proposals for financing only certain projects of the IPDC, were also widely reported in the Mexican press. This type of assistance, which was said to be "more in keeping with the preoccupations of the donors than with the wishes of the recipients," was strongly objected to by many Third World delegates.

Three news items focused on M'Bow's statements regarding the treatment of the communications question in the U.S. media. One of the

³ The position of Mexico may be compared with that of Venezuela, which has also attempted to respond to the question of private hegemony vs. state control: "We won't back any project that limits ideological freedom or restricts the role of the private sector," said Alejandro Alfonzo of Venezuela. "But we feel the principal responsibility to develop communications belongs to the state" (*New York Times*, January 20, 1982).

articles (*Uno Mas Uno*, January 22) bore the headline "U.S. Public Opinion Badly Informed: M'Bow." It then went on to quote remarks in a more conciliatory vein, to the effect that not all the U.S. press represented UNESCO as trying to restrict freedom of information, and that "even the U.S. government had supported the creation of the IPDC." Another article (*El Dia*, January 20) had a similar headline: "U.S. Public Opinion Badly Informed on New Communication Order." The article specified that this criticism applied particularly to ignorance of the objectives of the IPDC. In the third article (*El Dia*, January 20) one of the subheads also reported M'Bow's criticism but did not go into any detail.

Among the most important articles was the front-page interview with M'Bow published in the renowned Mexican daily *Excelsior* (January 20). The head of UNESCO made a number of statements defending freedom of expression and again reiterated the position that the attacks against the organization were undoubtedly due to ignorance. He also stated that the New Information and Communication Order was a long-term aspiration and that the IPDC in no way aimed at creating an information monopoly. Another article published in an important daily (*El Dia*, January 19) elaborated on M'Bow's activities in the area of communications and praised him as "one of the most tenacious voices alerting nations such as Mexico, which suffer from a state of dependence in the information field." The majority of the other articles reported the UNESCO head's statements defending the organization from attacks by the Western press. Also referred to was his concern for the financing of the IPDC program.

The Mexican coverage is particularly striking when contrasted with the type of reception M'Bow has received in many Western newspapers. The Mexican press clearly views M'Bow as an important Third World leader above and beyond his role as the head of UNESCO. Mexican support for UNESCO, especially with regard to the information question, also contrasts sharply with the criticism of the Western press.

In the Mexican news coverage of the IPDC, the aim of the program was defined in terms used by both M'Bow and Solana: "to increase cooperation and assistance for the development of communication infrastructures and to reduce the gap between various countries in the communication field."⁴ Other aspects of the IPDC that were stressed in many of the news items were its concrete nature, the importance of horizontal and multilateral assistance, and the goal of achieving "information sovereignty." (All these points were also mentioned in the Solana speech.) For example, according to one article (*El Sol de Acapulco*, January 19), "among the objectives of the program are reciprocal international cooperation within the context of freedom and self

⁴ These were the exact words of the consensus resolution on the aims of the IPDC adopted at the 21st General Conference of UNESCO in Belgrade in 1980.

determination. . . ." Another article referred to those IPDC documents emphasizing that the program should be "operational" (*Uno Mas Uno*, January 19). *La Prensa* (January 19) postulated that the IPDC aimed at "reducing the gap between poor and rich countries, guaranteeing the improved exercise of freedom. . . and putting a stop to terrorism in the field of information."

The IPDC was often referred to in connection with the New International Information Order, which was cited in a total of 39 of the articles examined. In most cases one of the aims of the IPDC was explicitly or implicitly defined as the establishment of a new order. Two examples are quite typical of this linkage. "The new world communication order, which participants at this meeting will attempt to establish. . ." (*La Prensa*, January 19); ". . . the official delegates. . . who, after ten years of hard negotiations, are finally setting up the concrete mechanisms for a new world information and communication order. . ." (*Uno Mas Uno*, January 19).⁵

Several declarations on the New International Information Order made by delegates to the meeting were also reported. In an interview carried by a number of dailies, the Mexican ambassador to UNESCO stated that "the basic objectives of the program are to establish a new international information and communication order through developing the media in the poorest countries." Two dailies (*Excelsior* and *El Dia*) also reported extensively on the position taken by the Soviet representative, who declared that "the essence of the New International Information Order is the struggle for national sovereignty in the field of information and culture. . . ." The Soviet statement on the New International Information Order was undoubtedly highlighted because it represents a significant departure from the position previously taken by the U.S.S.R. on the information question. In spite of Western attempts to associate the New Order with the Soviets, they have only recently expressed anything beyond a lukewarm enthusiasm. In 1978 the Soviet delegate to the MacBride Commission reportedly asked, "What is the New World Information Order?"

It will also be recalled that the Mexican press was particularly enthusiastic about Solana's statement that the most solid basis for a New International Information Order would be new national orders. Similar declarations were also made at the first IPDC meeting in Paris in 1981,

⁵ The terminology used to refer to a new order in the field of information has itself been the subject of heated controversy. Those wishing to stress the link between this new order and the New International Economic Order use the term "New International Information Order"; this has been the position taken by the Non-Aligned Movement since the mid-1970s. The use of other terms such as "New World Information Order" and "New World Information and Communication Order" may indicate a desire to disassociate information from economic considerations or to introduce additional elements into the debate. For more on this point see (3, 6).

and may be viewed as an attempt by Third World spokespersons to address one of the most serious contradictions of the information debates: the discrepancy between the demands of developing countries at the international level and the inegalitarian nature of national information systems.

One of the most striking aspects of the Mexican coverage of the IPDC session was the resentment expressed toward the Western bloc, especially the United States.

The most severe criticism was leveled against the U.S. refusal to contribute directly to the IPDC fund. The U.S. agreed instead to make \$100,000 available in 1982 for specific projects, to be financed through the Agency for International Development. The U.S. delegate also favored bilateral assistance and stated that the private sector would be favored to invest in similar projects. As reported in the Mexican press, this position prompted virulent remarks by a number of Third World spokespersons who openly castigated either the industrialized countries as a whole (excepting France, which was praised for its contribution of \$2 million) or the United States in particular. For example, the Indian delegate's rhetorical question was reported in several newspapers: "How can we explain the continuing indifference and reluctance of some countries to contribute their share to a program that they helped to bring into existence?" Other instances of strong reprobation are evident in the following assessments, both of which were lead paragraphs: "The developed countries yesterday persisted in their efforts to bring about the failure of the IPDC, by showing very slight interest in making a decisive financial contribution to the various projects presented" (*El Dia*, January 23). "The developing countries expressed vehement criticism of the attitude of the United States and the other industrialized countries, which refused to provide financial support for the initial IPDC projects" (*Excelsior*, January 22). In one case a leading Mexican daily (*El Universal*, January 25) presented the possibility of a large Japanese contribution to the IPDC as "a severe blow to North American opposition to the establishment of a New World Information Order."

More specifically, the Mexican press expressed concern about the dangers of "tied aid," bilateral agreements, assistance from the private sector, and the possibility of the IPDC being used only for the transfer of technology. Two dailies (*El Dia*, January 24; *Uno Mas Uno*, January 20) reported the statement of the Mexican ambassador to UNESCO, who affirmed that any assistance for "specific projects" would be subject to IPDC control. Reference was also made to the position of the delegate from Mozambique, who found "unacceptable" the imposition of any conditions for participation in the IPDC (*Uno Mas Uno*, January 20).

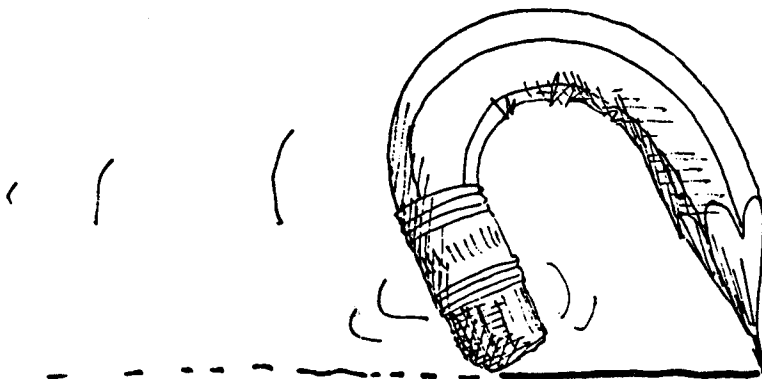
According to another article (*Uno Mas Uno*, January 19), one of the basic points adopted by the Group of 77 (representing the Non-Aligned Movement in the United Nations) was that the IPDC not be a "shopwindow where individual donors proposed bilateral assistance to specific countries."

According to the Mexican press, among the most virulent Third World spokespersons at the IPDC meeting were the Venezuelan and Cuban delegates. The ambassador of Venezuela, who is also the head of the Group of 77 in UNESCO, was quoted on several occasions. One news story (*El Dia*, January 22) ran the following statement by the Venezuelan delegate as its headline: "Only Information Transnationals Have Anything to Fear From IPDC." In another item he was quoted as referring to the "ridiculously low" sum of money allocated for training (*El Dia*, January 23).

The most strident position was taken by the Cuban delegate. A number of articles reported the Cuban attacks on the "free flow of information" principle as well as the warning that the IPDC might be used by the information transnationals as a "Marshall Plan for telecommunications" (*Uno Mas Uno*, January 21; *Excelsior*, January 20). Another objection raised by the Cuban spokesman was that the report of the committee establishing priorities for the IPDC projects "excluded" any reference to the New International Information Order (*Excelsior*, January 26). The priorities adopted at the meeting do not, in fact, make mention of the New International Information Order, but this does not necessarily mean that such references were "excluded." However, it may also be pointed out that in another article (*El Universal*, January 21) seven of the "proposed priorities" were listed, three of which did refer to the New International Information Order.

The Mexican press emphasized several points with respect to the specific projects discussed and adopted. There was universal concern about the disproportion between the funds available and the number of projects approved. The following headlines were quite typical: "Lack of Funds for 50 Communication Projects, 250 million dollars necessary but only 6 million available" (*El Universal*, January 23); "Wealthy Nations Uninterested in Financing IPDC Projects" (*El Dia*, January 23). However, this information was counter-balanced by numerous references to the Mexican proposal for seeking national financing for the projects as well as the suggested policy of "progressive spending."

The three projects that received the greatest attention in the Mexican coverage were the Pan African News Agency (PANA), the Asia-Pacific News Network, and the Latin American Special Information Services Agency (ALASEI). In general, the Mexican press pointed out specific U.S. objections to these projects, but then went on clearly to support opposing viewpoints. For example, several articles reported the East



German delegate's endorsement of PANA as "a decisive step towards eliminating racism in South Africa," followed by the U.S. representative's criticism of this position as a "divisive strategy." However, the socialist delegate who defended the project as being perfectly consonant with IPDC aims was given the last word.

The one exception to this type of article was a news item that appeared under the headline "UNESCO Agency Approves \$1.5 Million for News Agency" (*The News*, January 22). After presenting information on PANA, the article concluded: "Western countries. . . have expressed fears that programs such as PANA would curtail their access to the developing world. PANA's ruling body will be made up of the information ministers from member states, many of which do not have a free press." Curiously enough, although the news agency was not credited, this article was actually an AP dispatch.

U.S. objections to the Asia-Pacific News Network were also presented in an unfavorable light. Two articles (*Excelsior*, January 22; *El Dia*, January 22) presented the U.S. criticism, namely that "the network would require incoming news from international agencies to be distributed through national news agencies." However, both articles then referred to the acerbic reply of the Soviet delegate, who registered his surprise at the U.S. response since "one of the principles of the IPDC was to eradicate neocolonialism in the field of information." One of the articles also cited the reply of the head of PANA.

As for the ALASEI, two articles (*Excelsior*, January 22; *El Dia*, January 22) referred to Argentine opposition to the project but did not elaborate on the substance of this criticism. The response of the Mexican delegate, however, was quoted at length. The Mexican representative stated that the creation of this agency would fulfill the mandate of the

Costa Rica Conference⁶ and constituted one of the only alternatives in the region capable of countering the extremely imbalanced information flow. Another article (*Excelsior*, January 23) informed its readers that "the U.S. even persisted in its strategy of blocking Third World projects, such as the ALASEI, because of a supposed ideological danger."

One of the major points of controversy arose over what may be termed the "social participation" conflict.

A number of articles referred to the objections made by the United States, Peru, and Argentina when this term was used in reference to several projects sponsored by Mexico. It was reported that these countries "demonstrated their concern at the danger implied in a greater participation of social groups in the communication process" (*El Dia*, January 23). However, the strongest criticism was voiced when "social participation" was used in referring to the "priorities" for IPDC projects. After the United States and the Federal Republic of Germany refused to compromise on this point, the wording was changed to say the projects should "increase the capacity of individuals and groups to receive and transmit information at community and rural levels." The reason for this position was that "such a principle has been interpreted as a means of transfer of editorial responsibility from editors to other groups" and that it was used as a justification for the takeover of ten Lima newspapers by the Peruvian military regime (see 7).

The issue of "social participation" provided the substance of four of the ten articles viewed as presenting an overall negative or hostile appraisal of the Acapulco meeting. (All four articles were published by *Novedades de Acapulco*, January 21-24.) The articles bore headlines such as "UNESCO Wants More Government Influence on the Press" and "Dangerous Declaration Corrected." The position of the U.S. delegation was quoted as well as the official statements made by the World Press Freedom Committee and the Inter-American Press Association, which alerted U.S. spokespersons to the "dangers" of this term.

While the problem of "social participation," which relates to the much larger question of the "social" nature of communication, is too extensive to be treated fully here, certain brief remarks are in order. First, it should be pointed out that there is a semantic or perhaps linguistic element involved in this question. In Spanish, particularly in Latin America, use of the term "social" in connection with "communication" is quite acceptable. In fact, "social communication" is often used

⁶ The delegate was referring to the Intergovernmental Conference on Communication Policies in Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Costa Rica in 1976. This was the first UNESCO conference on national communication policies and the positions taken by many Latin American delegates were strongly attacked by the Western press. Several spokespersons at the IPDC meeting evoked the "mandate of Costa Rica."

interchangeably with “communication,” the assumption being that communication is in essence a social phenomenon. Thus, throughout the Mexican coverage of the IPDC meeting there were innumerable references to “social communication” which would generally be translated into English as “communication” or “mass communication.” Evidence of the fact that there is nothing subversive in the use of the word “social” in reference to communication is found in one of the most virulent editorials against UNESCO (*Novedades*, January 20), which speaks of the “social communication media.” This language difference should be kept in mind when considering the apparent U.S. allergy to the word “social.”

Second, one cannot lose sight of the fact that Mexico has been a particularly adamant defender of the “social” aspects of communication. This was evident throughout the press coverage of the conference. In virtually all the speeches made by Mexican delegates, particularly that by Solana, emphasis was placed on communication as a “social” right, on the access of different “social” groups to communication, on “social participation,” etc. For example, one article (*Uno Mas Uno*, January 27) stated that private funding would not be rejected as long as it conformed to the standards and aims of “a social nature” established by the IPDC. And in one of the longest editorials published during this period (“Social and National Responsibility of the Mass Media,” *El Dia*, January 21) the communication specialists at the IPDC meeting were said to have unquestionably affirmed the “social nature” of the right to information and freedom of expression.

In addition to the question of “social participation,” the ten articles found to be extremely critical of the IPDC meeting repeated the charges against UNESCO that are now familiar to those who have been following the debates on the New International Information Order over the last few years. Three articles (*Novedades*, January 20; *El Herald*, January 14; *El Herald*, January 25) associated UNESCO’s activities with the Soviet bloc and attacked the organization for menacing freedom of the press and advocating government control of the media. Although two of the articles made reference to the IPDC, it was not specifically criticized. The following are typical examples of the language used in these attacks: “. . . this position [on the New International Information Order] actually corresponds to a propaganda tactic sponsored and diffused by the Soviet Union”; “We—free journalists—and together with us, the majority of democratic nations, will never accept ‘regulation of the right to information.’”

Moreover, it is important to point out that several other articles critical of the IPDC were based on UPI dispatches. In fact, out of a total of five UPI news stories published in the Mexican press, four presented typical Western reactions to the UNESCO debates. Two of the news stories critical of the “social participation” criteria originated from UPI

correspondents. The third UPI story had the headline "UNESCO Documents Threaten Freedom of the Press" (*El Herald*, January 18). According to UPI, the IPDC was meeting "to discuss a series of measures which, in the opinion of certain newspaper editors, would restrict freedom of the press," and "many of the IPDC projects were designed to develop news systems controlled by governments." The subhead of the fourth UPI story (*El Herald*, January 22) ran as follows: "Continuing Concern Over Threats to Free Flow of News"; the story itself elaborated on U.S. fears about the IPDC projects. The fifth UPI news item (*El Herald*, January 20) was not classified as hostile to the IPDC meeting, as it presented Third World, Socialist, and Western reactions (those of India, the Soviet Union, the Inter-American Press Association, and the World Press Freedom Committee).

Three other articles relied on AFP dispatches. Two articles (*El Dia*, January 17; *El Universal*, January 17) referred to the same AFP wire story, a factual presentation of the agenda for the IPDC session. The third dispatch (*El Herald*, January 31) did not refer to the IPDC meeting but rather to the New International Information Order and UNESCO. The article was headlined: "UNESCO's New Order Threatens Right to Information." It quoted an Argentine jurist who elaborated on the charges of the Inter-American Press Association that UNESCO is jeopardizing freedom of expression.

In light of the charges that have been leveled against the international news agencies, particularly UPI and AP, it is significant that the Mexican newspapers that were most critical of the IPDC meeting or various aspects of the information discussions were the same newspapers that made use of the coverage by the international news agencies. Apart from the articles cited above (as well as the AP story appearing in *The News*), none of the other newspapers relied on either national or international news agencies. Almost all of the articles were written by special correspondents, which testifies to the importance of the IPDC session for the Mexican press.

As it appeared in the U.S. press, the Western view of the IPDC is in marked contrast to the Third World conception of the program.

The Western view of the IPDC was of "an information clearinghouse where donor countries could select projects they were willing to finance." Although many references were made to Third World speeches denouncing the industrialized countries' reluctance to contribute directly to the program, as well to as M'Bow's defense of UNESCO's communication projects, most of the articles concentrated on U.S. apprehensions about "government control of the media" and threats to

the "free flow of information."⁷ In the first *New York Times* article of this period (January 20; the same article was also published in the *International Herald Tribune* of January 21), the term "government control" appears three times in the first six paragraphs. The article points out that this argument was used as the main justification for the U.S. refusal to make a direct contribution to the IPDC. Indeed, the specter of "government control" loomed large throughout the Acapulco conference. Another news item published the same day in the *International Herald Tribune* had the headline "UN Parley on News Flow Opens; U.S. Fights Government Controls" and, once again, several references were made to the "series of proposals that would increase government control of news." Likewise, the overall issue of the New International Information Order was presented in terms of government control. Thus, another *New York Times* article (January 22) cited U.S. concerns with "guiding discussions of a 'new world information order' at UNESCO away from efforts to restrict journalistic freedom and towards practical ways of aiding communications in poor countries."

An article dealing with the controversy over "social participation" (*International Herald Tribune*, January 23–24) noted that "the U.S. and W. Germany opposed language that implied government takeovers and control of news . . ." Further on, the article referred to Western observers who objected to "active social participation, . . . declaring it would pave the way for government takeovers of newspapers and other media." The article also noted U.S. opposition to language calling for projects "to permit a more balanced exchange of news," which was modified to a clause urging "a free flow and a wider balance of news."

Reporting of U.S. objections to the Asia-Pacific News Network and the PANA project followed the same line. Two articles presented the U.S. position on the Asia-Pacific network: that it had recommended that Western news agencies such as AP and UPI be allowed to distribute news only through national agencies (*New York Times*, January 22; *International Herald Tribune*, January 24). However, the most severe criticism was reserved for the PANA project. Although several articles did present the Third World defense of the agency along with U.S. criticism, two articles were outstanding for their bias against PANA. One article (*International Herald Tribune*, January 20) reported that according to a so-called preparatory document on PANA, the agency would be "controlled" by the Conference of African Ministers of Information and

⁷ The "free flow" doctrine has been firmly supported by the Reagan administration. On September 17, 1981, the President sent a telegram to the Speaker of the House stating that "the United States has long regarded the free flow of information as a cornerstone of any democratic political order. . . ." At Acapulco, the position of the U.S. delegation was that the criteria used to judge the various projects "should include whether a proposed project enhances the free flow of information among people and nations of the world."

that "the flow of news will be regulated by means of a quota." Another article (*International Herald Tribune*, January 27) reported that the U.S. delegate had "*extracted* a pledge of the PANA not to interfere with the work of competing international news agencies. . ." (emphasis added). The project document of PANA submitted to the IPDC session in fact states that "a long-term objective of the project is the establishment of a source of regular, up-to-date news and information on Africa, with co-operative relations with international news agencies. . ." And in the Final Report of the Meeting, in the summaries of discussions on the PANA project, it is stated that "some delegates commended the explicit intention of PANA to collaborate constructively with the international news agencies. . . ."

The AP coverage of the second IPDC session did not differ substantially from the items examined above. However, a number of dispatches did express even stronger disapproval and criticism. In one dispatch (January 18) the IPDC council was referred to as being "top-heavy with Third World and Soviet-influenced delegates." The presentation of the PANA project was particularly striking. According to the AP correspondent, "the United Nations is expected to fund a Pan African news agency to challenge coverage of the continent by international news agencies and offset what critics say is the Western media's distorted view of African events. . . . It stresses a link-up of government-run news agencies." The last dispatch of the period referred to "final moves reflecting Western concern that the agency [UNESCO] is too intent on fostering national or government news agencies that eventually could become the only source of information from some parts of the world."

Both Third World and U.S. spokespersons were reported to be satisfied with the results of the conference, although neither side claimed a victory.

Several articles reported the words of the Mexican ambassador to UNESCO, who felt that the second IPDC session as a whole was a success, for it had achieved one of its primary objectives: "examining a totality of projects presented in different countries, regions and sub-regions. . ." (*El Dia*, January 24). A very serious analysis of the IPDC, published shortly after the meeting ended, also evaluated it as a "success" but for a different reason—because the Group of 77 had presented a united front in rejecting the attempted imposition of the "free flow" principle (*Uno Mas Uno*, February 8). Needless to say, in summing up the debates the Third World delegates registered concern at the Western position on funds, but did not feel that the IPDC would founder for lack of financing. One spokesman said that the Western rejection of the IPDC was unjustified but that the 54 projects would not die because of "economic asphyxiation" (*Excelsior*, January 24). Several

other delegates were of the opinion that there "was enough money to begin" and that other sources would be sought at a later date.

The IPDC meeting was also judged as successful from the U.S. viewpoint. Midway through the meeting, the chief U.S. delegate was quoted as saying that "he was not dismayed by the direction of the meeting" and that the program "could still serve a useful purpose as 'an information clearinghouse'" (*New York Times*, January 20). At the meeting's close, the same delegate stated that "the mature and responsible tone of debate had 'inspired confidence' for the future" (*New York Times*, January 26). Another article made the reasons for U.S. satisfaction even clearer: the fact that the conference did not discuss "ideological" themes and avoided "political intrusions" (*International Herald Tribune*, January 27).

However, it would be unwise to interpret the mutual satisfaction expressed after the conference as a "meeting of the minds" or even as a truce between the two camps. The debates in Acapulco demonstrated that the positions of both sides have become increasingly intransigent on one of the key issues: the free flow of information. The U.S. press continues to express concerns about government control, while the Third World has rallied behind a New *International* Information Order, the credibility of which increasingly depends on its realization in terms of national realities. If concrete action is actually taken toward achieving the goals of the IPDC, the debate may finally move beyond the stage of divisive rhetoric.

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