

FEW VOICES, MANY WORLDS

Istanbul Statement, Adopted June 21, 1991

The Third MacBride Round Table met at the end of a conference (News Media and International Conflict), sponsored by the IAMCR (International Association of Mass Communication Research) and the ILAD (Turkish Communication Research Association), which critically assessed the roles the mass media played in the war in the Persian Gulf. Following the MacBride Roundtables of Harare (1989) and Prague (1990), it met on June 21, 1991 in the ancient city of Istanbul, Turkey at the crossroads of East and West, North and South. The 24 participants, coming from 14 countries, in an endeavor to debate and pursue the thoughts and values of the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO), as advanced by the Non-Aligned Movement and inspired by the ideals of the late Sean MacBride, make the following observations on the current state of communication and mass mediated culture.

We observe with growing concern the rapidly increasing concentration, homogenization, commercialization, and militarization of national and world cultures.

The principles of the MacBride Report (*Many Voices, One World*), have been countered by the virtual monopoly of global conglomerates over the selection, production, and marketing of information and entertainment products, including crucial scientific and technical data and informational rights; by the transnational industrial-media complex under its American military protectorate; and by the weakening of multilateral relations and international organizations. This trend has further widened the inequities of resources within and among nations.

We are confronted, therefore, with media coalescing into a centrally manufactured, symbolic and cultural environment. That environment permeates every home in an ever growing number of countries. It is displacing parents, schools, communities, publics, and even nations as the originator of messages and images that define our lives and our relationships with each other. It serves marketing strategies and government priorities that are increasingly out of reach of democratic policy-making.

Great efforts must now be made to develop a culture of non-violence, of dialogue and negotiations, practicing the art of democracy, and promoting a culture of peace. This effectively means to demilitarize cultural products and processes.

Politically, alternative systems of peace and security need to be established, both on the global and regional levels. The United Nations, and especially UNESCO, should play a central role in this, thus becoming what they were always meant to be, peace-making and peace-keeping bodies.

The challenge before us is to build new peoples' coalitions and constituencies that can help regain a significant measure of participation in cultural policymaking, nationally and internationally.

The coalitions should include a broad range of public groups, social movements, and organizations. They should enlist media professionals, citizen activists, consumer groups, women's, minorities, religious, labor, environmental, and other organizations in the new cultural struggle.

The democratization of communication should be built on the strength of national coalitions entering into international cooperation on the basis of independence, equality, and mutually beneficial objectives. The new frontier for the advancement of human values and rights is the cultural frontier. It is there that the MacBride Principles have to be recognized as more essential than ever.

In pursuance of these and other relevant objectives, the MacBride Roundtable will publish a collection of Roundtable documents, support the development of and communication amongst groups concerned with media democratization, and organize further meetings to facilitate the work of the Roundtable and related coalitions.