

TEN YEARS OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS FORUM

1991 - 2001



The battle to shape media that  
merit public confidence



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# How the ICF began

**By William Porter**

**I**t is unlikely that any change of direction in human behaviour and purpose takes place just for one reason or because of one thing. Even before a change occurs, there are elements at work that provoke it. It is the consequence of a number of factors. And if the change is to be one in a right direction, it needs to have an inner source of inspiration.

In my case there were at least two triggers of change which were decisive, but there was also a fair amount of thinking about the state of society and of the role of my world, the media, in affecting it.

The first trigger was reading in *The Financial Times* about 11 years ago that the communications industry, including the mass media, had become the largest industry in the world. That led me to ask if we were the most responsible and I felt that the answer was a definite NO. And where was I as the Chief Executive of a Publishing Group on the issue of responsibility? I realised that I had never asked myself the question, nor been asked by peers and superiors, 'What is the effect of your products for good or ill on the people who read, listen to and watch them?' If we did have something which had a good social effect, I was happy to take some praise, but if it had a bad effect, I washed my hands of it, saying that those problems were a matter for politicians, religious leaders and sociologists, but not mine. I had freedom to publish and freedom of information and the consequences were not my affair. I thought this through a little further and realised that media people were not like the manufacturers of soap or chocolate. We had a product that affected the lives and hopes and fears of millions of people and that we should be ready to stand up and be counted for its effects.

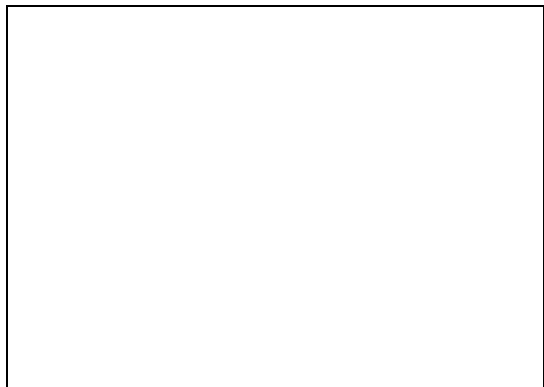
Until that time my business motivations had been entirely to make money and to become important, both for my company and for myself. I am not saying that these are necessarily bad motivations, but they lack the element of responsibility. How to estimate responsibility? I came to the conclusion that the best guide was the human conscience, that remarkable piece of high technology that is inside us, albeit often covered over with the compromises of a life time. It enables us to know what is right or wrong, what is honest or false, what is just or unjust and the right moral course to take in any situation. I decided that obedience to my conscience would be the future basis for my business and private life.

There were other factors at work. We had just experienced the euphoria of the end of the Cold War, and many of us thought that now we had it made for democracy, the free market and the rule of law. This was not to be, and we experienced what I call the cold shower of the

reality of human greed and ambition. There was the Gulf War and its consequences. Millions were dying of starvation in Africa and elsewhere. Violence was increasing in the great cities of the West. Poverty and unemployment were seemingly insoluble problems. But worst of all, ethnic conflict was straddling the Globe. The United Nations said that there were more than a thousand flashpoints at which ethnic clash was actual or potential.. And this was close to home for me, as my wife was Yugoslav with a Sarajevo mother and a Montenegrin father, brought up in Serbia with an Orthodox faith. The ghastly tragedy of Bosnia was about to unfold.

Faced with this world scene what was the role of the media? Had we come from another planet to report on the end of the Earth's civilisation and then we could go back from whence we came? No. We were part of it all and had children, grandchildren and loved ones for whom we would like to see a better world. So I felt an effort had to be made to find a role and purpose for the media to play a decisive part in building a free and just society.

At that point I decided to talk things over with my wife, Sonja, for whose opinion I had a great respect. As a girl of 17 she had been a message carrier for Tito's resistance against the German occupation of her country. She was captured and spent three years in a German concentration camp, towards the end of which she was sentenced to death, but managed to escape. After the war she resumed her law studies at Belgrade University and also became fluent in eight languages. When Tito came to power she was put under much pressure to become a communist activist, but refused. Sonja became a suspect person and was arrested and tried as 'an enemy of the people' and sentenced to death. She was sent to a camp where the death sentences were carried out by shooting at three o'clock in the morning. She got dressed nine nights running expecting to be shot and on the tenth morning was called into the Commandants office, told that there had been a mistake and put into the street. But in her mind she had died nine times.



**Bill and Sonja**

However, she was a human of great resilience and maintained a positive outlook on life. Apart from her red hair, it was those qualities which attracted me to her when I was visiting Yugoslavia to write articles many years later, and so ended my bachelor's life. On the occasion when I told her of my new thinking about the media she listened very carefully and at the end looked me in the eyes and said, 'If you are thinking that way, why don't you do something about it?' That was the second trigger which stirred me to action.

I then got in touch with several of my friends well-placed in publishing, broadcasting, journalism and advertising and with some hesitation told them about my new convictions. I said with hesitation, because I

was very sensitive as to what people thought about me and I did not wish to be laughed at or ignored. However, four of my friends responded and it turned out that they also had been re-thinking the media's role and were ashamed of some of the bad effects that we had had on society in the last ten to twenty years.

We decided to act with the intention of building up a world-wide network of men and women in the media who believed in moral values and applied them in their lives and so would naturally impact their companies and audiences. We decided to call it the International Communications Forum, because it would be international, would include all communication sectors and would be a genuine forum, not yet another organisation. It would be a conscience to conscience activity.

Our first move was to hold a Conference at the Caux Centre in Switzerland because of its beautiful geographical location and because of the warm welcome given by the Caux organisers. Since then we have had similar conferences on 22 occasions in many parts of the world and are now in touch with more than 2,000 media professionals in 117 countries. The full story of that is told in this Report.

I have sometimes been asked the question, as to how I would have lived my life if the ICF had not have happened. I usually say, 'Playing golf and bridge, going on cruises and chasing comely widows.' Well, it would have been something like that, and many of my retired friends live that way.

If in 1991 there were at least ten thousand persons in the world with the equivalent experience, the same level of intelligence and the degree of self-confidence that I had, why me? I do not know the answer to that question, but I do know that, when I decided to take this road, I experienced a sense of inner compulsion that has never left me. From whence comes the Inner Compulsion, and I give it capital letters, if not from some superior guiding force in the Universe.

I am now classified as a 'lapsed agnostic' or even 'renegade agnostic' and did not easily accept the concept of a living God. But each morning I take the decision to co-operate with the forces for good in the world, and I cannot deny that some factor is at work in me which maintains my purpose and commitment. All this, in spite of some physical knocks like a quadruple heart bypass, a snapped Achilles tendon, a smashed sinus, grommets in both ears, cataract operations on both eyes, an artificial hip joint and a double bacterial infection caught in one of London's best hospitals. These are obstacles to be overcome, not blockages on the road. The adrenaline works well no matter what. If anything has been achieved through me, and I am only one of many working through the ICF, it must be attributed to this experience of inner compulsion. I believe it is an experience that can happen to any person who seeks out for their destiny to be a remaker of society, a friend to many others, a putter-into-practice of moral values, and so to be a force to build a fair and just civilisation. •

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# Comments from founding members

Media are powerful and multiple. This makes them a major factor for the key players in all walks of life and for most of the world's citizens.

Thus media can, and should, alongside political leaders, educators, scientists claim a part in shaping a better world for more people. But basic attitudes, concern for public affairs, in short democracy all depend on full and adequate information.

It seems therefore vital that an international group of media leaders adopt a code of ethics notably pledging to give facts and all the facts, separating them from opinion and giving as much importance to answers as to problems. These leaders would be mindful of their great influence since they convey reality to their readers, viewers, listeners.

The forum was created ten years ago. It is well on its way to reaching its major objective: a growing awareness of the responsibility of media to society.

**Armand de Malherbe,**  
Vice Chairman, European Advertising Tripartite

The more 'globalised' our world becomes, the more we need accurate information. The brilliant technology available to the media today brings us all too close to famine, flood and war. But focusing the difficult decisions on which solutions depend is no easier than it has ever been.

The series of Forums which William Porter and his associates have staged since 1991 have made an important contribution to the thinking of journalists, editors, proprietors and others connected with the media in many countries. I have had the privilege of attending a number of these events, which have stimulated my own perspectives.

The next stage in what the International Communications Forum has started is supremely important. We could find ourselves mesmerised by superficial, unsatisfying media products created primarily to make a few individuals richer. Or we could get to know our fellow human beings with greater understanding and compassion. If the media chooses the second of these options, which the ICF has done so much to focus for us, we could stand to benefit greatly.

**Rajmohan Gandhi,** India,  
distinguished author and academic

There were three reasons for my involvement with the early days of ICF. One was my personal esteem for Bill Porter; the second was my agreement with his criticisms of the low standards in many parts of the media; the third was his determination to do something about it.

So I became one of the founders, but failed to be as active in the cause as I should have, and as Bill would have liked me to be. The reason for this was simply that I had other ideas to pursue – ideas sufficiently parallel with ICF that I remained in close touch with Bill and his associates, and followed ICF's achievements with admiration.

Also, my interests have centred round book publishing, which is a small and, on the whole, less guilty sector of the media than newspapers and television, on which ICF has rightly concentrated.

The factors which motivated ICF ten years ago are just as valid today. Every righteous protest begins with the lonely voices of a minority.

**Gordon Graham**, Publisher, *Logos*,  
former President of British Publishers Association

**Gordon Graham, left, in conversation with  
Graham Turner**



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## Invitation to First International Communications Forum

### THE ROLE OF COMMUNICATIONS IN BUILDING A FREE AND UNITED SOCIETY

You are warmly invited to take part in an  
International Forum for the Communications Industry  
to be held at  
Caux, Switzerland  
from 14 – 18 August 1991

We all heaved a sigh of relief when the fruitless years of the Cold War gave way to the promise of co-operation and understanding between the democratic and former Communist power groupings. Yet now, a few short months later, peace between nations and within society still seems to be beyond our grasp.

In this context, what is the role of the communications industry, of the Information Society, to which we belong, in this last decade of a tumultuous century? We are the largest industry in the world, but are we, correspondingly, the most responsible? Few of us, if any, would feel this to be true.

Against a threatening background, can we reach out for a destiny whereby the media in all its forms can bring hope, trust, motivation, quality and greatness into every mind, home and workplace of the teeming millions of this Earth?

The purpose of the Forum is to bring together those men and women in the media and the creative and performing arts who would like to respond to this challenge. They may be of all faiths and of no faith, but they will be looking for a way to make peace and justice permanent and not transient factors on the road of humanity.

Sessions will be keynoted and led by experienced leaders of the industry, and will tackle specific subjects such as:

- Freedom and Responsibility in the Information Society
- Moral Issues Facing the Advertising Industry
- Writing to Clarify Events and to Stabilise Society

All delegates are invited to take an active part in the discussions, in formulating the objectives and in deciding the action needed to achieve the task.

The organisers of the Caux Industrial Conference have kindly agreed to place this Forum in that setting, and an application brochure accompanies this invitation. No commitments and no involvements are implied, other than those which are willingly undertaken to construct a new moral climate for the nineties, in accordance with individual conscience and personal creativity.

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# A worldwide outreach

## World list of official IC Forums 1991-2001

- 1991 *Caux, Switzerland*: Inauguration Forum – Communications and a Free Society
- 1992 *Le Touquet, France*: Media Initiatives for Progress
- 1992 *Caux, Switzerland*: What are the Media handing over to the 21st Century?
- 1993 *Cantigny, Illinois, USA*: American Media seek a New Direction
- 1993 *Nizhny Novgorod, Russia*: A Moral and Cultural Role for the Media
- 1995 *Toronto, Canada*: The Media and Ethnicity
- 1995 *Kazimierz Dolny, Poland*: Freedom and Responsibility – Dilemma of the Media
- 1996 *Dobogoko, Hungary*: Which Way for the Media of Central Europe?
- 1996 *Caux, Switzerland*: A Platform for Progress
- 1997 *Sydney, Australia*: The Role and Responsibility of the Media
- 1997 *Caux, Switzerland*: The Post-Communist Challenge to Europe
- 1998 *Pardubice, Czech Republic*: The Media's Role in building a New and Outgoing Europe
- 1998 *Caux, Switzerland*: Media in the Community
- 1999 *FT, London, UK*: The Media and Public Confidence
- 1999 *Ballina, Rep. of Ireland*: Creating a Climate of Confidence in the Media
- 1999 *Kingston, Jamaica*: The Media and Society in the Caribbean
- 1999 *Caux, Switzerland*: Formation of the Media for the 21st Century
- 2000 *Caux, Switzerland*: Communication and the Arts
- 2000 *Sarajevo, Bosnia*: The Media – a Decisive Force in building a Free and Just Society
- 2001 *Denver, Colorado, USA*: American Media and the World Community
- 2001 *Caux, Switzerland*: Facing the Future
- 2001 *Scotland, three cities*: How the Media affects Society

**Presentations** to media audiences have been made at the Nieman Foundation and the Shorenstein Center in Harvard (USA), at schools of Journalism in Toronto and Ottawa, (Canada), Brisbane, (Australia), Aberdeen's Robert Gordon, Edinburgh's Napier and Glasgow's Caledonian Universities (Scotland); also New Delhi, (India), Stellenbosch (South Africa) and Miami (USA).

**Presentations** have also taken place at Press Clubs in Brno, (Czechia), Martinique, Kingston, (Jamaica), New Delhi, Ottawa and Cincinnati; and at the Annual Convention of the American Society of Professional Journalists.

**Special Journeys** to inform publishers, editors and senior media persons have been undertaken in India, Malaysia, Australia, South Africa, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Serbia, Bosnia, Croatia, Northern Ireland, the Irish Republic, Scotland, Wales, England, France, Switzerland, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Lebanon, Canada, the USA, the Caribbean, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Brazil.

**Active Touch** is maintained with some 2,000 media professionals in 116 countries by regular mailings and by involvement in local, regional, and international activities.

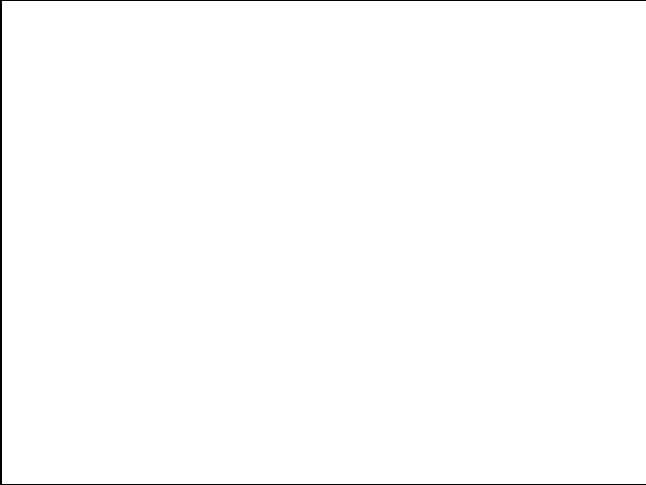
**Future Events** are planned for Beirut for the Lebanon and the Middle East, and in Cape Town for Southern Africa.

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# Pope Jean Paul II

receives the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the  
International Communications Forum in audience

Rome, 25 May, 1999



**P**ope Jean Paul II gave twenty minutes today in his private office for William Porter, Chairman, and Bernard Margueritte, Vice Chairman of the International Communications Forum, to inform him of media issues and of the ideas and work of the Forum. He listened with great attention to Mr. Margueritte's outline, given in fluent Polish, nodding his agreement from time to time and with the occasional encouraging remark.

Porter and Margueritte were particularly appreciative of the Pope's recent message on World Communication Day (16 May, 1999), when he referred to the media's special responsibility to witness to the truth about life, about human dignity and about the true meaning of our freedom and mutual interdependence.

In this message the Pope had asked the media to look with great hope to the new millennium and that the world of the media would become 'a more and more friendly companion to all people presenting them with information wedded to wisdom and entertainment wedded to joy.'

The Pope was assured of the Forum's commitment to moral and human values and of its determination to work with him to give the men and women of the media a constructive purpose in this crisis-ridden and unfulfilled age. At the end of the meeting Jean Paul II shook hands warmly with both visitors saying, 'My blessings for your activity.'

It was interesting to note in the sequence of the Pope's visitors that morning that Porter and Margueritte were preceded by Mayor Luzhkov of Moscow and followed by the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia.

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# Summary Report of the Forums

## 1. Caux, Switzerland: August 1991

'The purpose of the International Communications Forum is to create a world-wide network of friendships among people in the media who want to play a part through their work in building a freer, fairer world. Their aim is to promote the ethical and spiritual values which underpin democracy—honesty, unselfishness, the search for the truth and the primacy of the individual conscience.'

From the outset, this first ICF conference was supposed to be a different kind of conference. We should 'speak of personal experiences and express true convictions', was the motto. 'What kind of freedom should be the press freedom', asked **Gordon Graham**? 'We will help,' he said, 'to restore the balance between too little freedom and a so-called freedom which assaults the integrity of individuals'. 'Resisting the decline of freedom into licence, should be the key. We should also aim at partnership between media people and their audiences.'

## 2. le Touquet, France: April 1992

Have we destroyed the values of a generation? Michael Keating, USA, depicted the destructive side of the media, perverting society and particularly the young. Dr. Zaki Badawi, Principal of the Muslim College in London, spoke about the media 'polluted by unethical and anti-social messages'. Gordon Page, Governor of the International Press

Foundation, stressed that better international reporting is 'essential for improved international understanding'. Gordon Graham, editor of Logos, added: 'one of the many paradoxes surrounding "freedom to publish" is that responsibility is easier to exercise when freedom is limited or denied...The responsibility of the publisher becomes primary when political freedom is attained... The courage of those who protest through the printed word under dictatorship is universally admired. The conscience of those who set voluntary ethical standards in free society is equally important, and should be equally admired. Both groups are minorities.'

### 3. Caux, Switzerland: August 1992

This forum dealt with the media's three main functions— Information, Entertainment and Education. A powerful question was asked: 'What are the media handing over to the 21st century?' The general feeling was that not enough people apply their minds to the moral black hole into which sections of the media

have been sign-posting society.' Graham Turner, a leading British investigative reporter, pointed out that 'we face a very grave crisis in the world, more serious than for many generations' and added: 'the media have to offer solutions and not merely problems. That requires an effort of the brain and then seeking in a reasonable way to elevate the noble as well as reporting the sordid. How well we perform that function will have a profound effect on the direction of our civilisation'.

### 4. Cantigny, USA: April–May 1993

Richard Abel, American publisher, drew a distinction between 'Hitlerian and Leninist manipulations of the truth' and the creators of US mass-media products, who are only sowing 'cultural nihilism, ethical confusion and social decadence'. Roger Parkinson expressed the conviction that change in the media is only possible if it begins with ourselves. He pointed out, on the other hand, that 'we must be aware of two facts of life: we're not going to eliminate the profit motive in the media. And there's not going to be censorship'.

Gordon Graham agreed that the cutting edge is our individual actions. 'It would be fatal, he said, to institutionalise the idea of this Forum. We are not a movement and we must keep it that way. This way there is a great sense of fellowship, egalitarianism and adventure.'

### 5. Nizhny Novgorod, Russia: September 1993

Olga Noskova, studio director of the State Regional Television company, recalled a thesis she wrote in 1983, during the communist times, on the need for journalists to be free to express their opinions. Now she could have to write a thesis with the opposite view. 'The savagery of press freedom today is such that it resembles the freedom of the madhouse.

'What is worse is, that, after the cultural shock of the change of political system, there is now a complete cultural indifference: we live in a society without any ideals. We must have a system of values. We have destroyed the old one, but we have not created the new.'

'This Forum has meant a great deal to me,' said one Nihzny editor, 'it

has confirmed my belief in the need for moral values in society.' Another journalist added: 'after 30 years in my profession I had given up believing that anyone shared my ideals. This week-end has restored my faith that there are such people.'

## **6. Ontario, Canada: April 1995**

The three-day symposium, organised jointly by the International Communications Forum and the Canadian Journalism Foundation, provided a fresh view on media and ethnicity. Bernard Margueritte, French correspondent in Eastern Europe, argued that 'problems with ethnicity arise because people don't know enough about each other, are unaware of the thoughts, the dreams, the difficulties of people of other origins, and therefore don't understand and respect each other.' But it should be one of the main roles of the media to bring people together, to make them know each other.

A Canadian Muslim said that his friends 'are tired of being stereotyped as terrorists and ayatollahs'. It was so even before the Gulf War and is much worse after it. In a very prophetic message, Rajmohan Gandhi, wrote, 'class hate as an ideology is behind us, but ethnic hate is with us and is ahead of us. Who will disentangle the love of one's own people, which is a great quality, from disliking of another people?' Gandhi's grandson then thanked ICF people for embarking 'on this crucial effort to arm the citizen with the weapons of understanding and knowledge in the fight against the half-truths on which hate and intolerance ride.'

## **7. Kazimierz Dolny, Poland: December 1995**

One of the basic questions asked during this conference held in a country recently liberated from communism was: is it enough to get rid of totalitarianism and censorship to become a truly free press? Michal Komar, Chairman of the Editors Association, was unconvinced: 'Following the fall of communism, freedom was taken as a moral alibi, but it soon transpired that freedom did not necessarily go hand in hand with ethical values.'

Indeed Monsignor Wieslaw Nieweglowski, the Primate's chaplain to the intellectual and artistic community, pointed out in a message (illness prevented him from attending) that 'freedom is not the final word'. Poland knows it very well. The fact that the media was freed from censorship and limitations 'did not cause it automatically to take on its proper function of serving democracy and society'. Alas, 'sensationalism came before truth, independence before responsibility, digging up filth before respect and trying to appeal to an audience



before sincerity. It has turned out that freedom is much more difficult to maintain than was taking action to procure it under oppression!’

## 8. Dobogoko, Hungary: March–April 1996

This conference was in a way a continuation of the previous one. How can we balance freedom with responsibility? This question is as valid in a new democracy of Central-Eastern Europe as elsewhere. Years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the optimism, then prevailing, has been replaced by pressures of financial austerity, foreign ownership of the

media, political and economic uncertainty, and for many the old familiar situation of working for media owners whose judgment is conditioned by political ideology or simply by the sole goal of maximizing profit.

Jan Pieklo, from the Krakow Foundation of Journalists, argued that today again journalists in former communist countries try to use the facts to carry across their own views. The consequences are far-reaching: ‘without basic media ethics it is impossible to build a democratic society’. The people do not have access to fair and unbiased information. They cannot make up their own mind and are unable to make decisions. Therefore they are not truly ‘citizens’.

Robert Kernohan, British broadcaster and former London editor of *The Herald*, Scotland’s leading daily, pointed out that ‘we need a sense of corporate conscience and that means that a sufficient number of people in positions of media power must be guided by an individual sense of conscience’.

## 9. Caux, Switzerland: July 1996

The highlight of this forum was the presentation by Michael Medved, the Hollywood film critic, and Martyn Lewis, the BBC News presenter. Both stressed the importance of resisting peer pressure when it came to the presenting of good news and the making of clean films. Lewis concluded by proposing four ‘laws’: 1. Try to report negative stories at least partly through the eyes of those who are seeking solutions to them. 2. Don’t automatically dismiss stories of success and achievements. 3. Consider success as being as worthy of analysis and explanation as failure. 4. As editor, challenge and encourage young journalists to write up the positive stories in as an interesting way as negative ones.



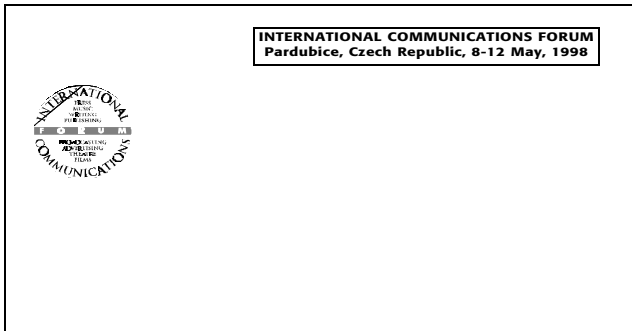
## 10. Sydney, Australia: March 1997

The debate there was a particularly open and frank one, and therefore extremely useful. Richard Walsh, Chairman of Australian Consolidated Press International, said that he was not convinced by the will of many ICF people to try to work in the media for a better and more human society. 'We have to distinguish ourselves as citizens and as participants in the media; yes as an individual I'm unhappy with society, I want change. But I don't transpose my desire for change into a critique of the media. Because I believe it is right and proper to reflect the society it operates in.' Bernard Margueritte countered that we have indeed to show society as it is, but also to look for the solutions offered to our problems. Moreover, we, people of the media, we are not business people (even if the economic side of the media is an important one) trying to make as much of a profit as possible selling goods to consumers. We would all be better off remembering that we are human beings and citizens addressing other human beings and citizens.

## 11. Caux, Switzerland: July 1997

After the fall of communism, Europe is coming together, yet there seems to be a decline of journalism both in Western and post-communist countries. As said Albert Camus: 'If we don't have freedom we can be sure we will not have good media, but if we do have freedom we cannot be sure we will have good media.' In centrally-governed countries, the struggle for a free media is intense and courageous. Where freedom prevails, there is a strong drive to exploit the media for ambitious and greedy ends.

Natasha Pejić, from the Belgrade Press Agency Beta, expressed her conviction that exchanges between Western and Eastern journalists are extremely valuable, even so – or maybe more so – when we see a danger of a switching of roles between East and West: 'Since the fall of communism, capitalism seems to be attempting to incorporate the humanistic aspects of socialist doctrine, while, at the same time, former communist countries, in a desperate struggle to recreate their world, are blindly discarding every aspect of their own tradition and praying only to the "God" of the market economy.'



## 12. Pardubice, Czech Republic: April 1998 (with one day in Bystrzyca, Poland)

The tone was set by Jaroslava Moserova, the Senator representing Pardubice and Vice President of the Czech Senate: 'Just as hate breeds hate, tolerance breeds tolerance and responsibility.'

Throughout the sessions, the adjectives 'new' and 'outgoing' recurred. The public is always seeking something new in the sense that life can be better than it was in the past. But outgoing is something different. That implies we are not merely building a Europe devoted to defending its own interests and living standards, but one primarily committed to establishing the values of civilisation and a fairness of distribution that will benefit the whole world.

During a foray into Poland Bogdan Krynicki, Mayor of Bystrzyca, and Krzysztof Komornicki, former head of the Polish Press Agency and a local social activist, presented the situation of the local media. Richard Hawthorne, director of a large Nottingham, England, printing firm and his wife, Meili, reported on successful efforts to build teamwork in their city through leading citizens. Robert Webb, an American journalist from Cincinnati, spoke of a new wave of interest in civic, community and public journalism across the American press.

## 13. Caux, Switzerland: July 1998

Media professionals from Northern Ireland, Bosnia and South Africa spoke about the role the media plays in conflict situations. They outlined their sense of personal responsibility and hopes for the future.

The media in the Balkans, divided along ethnic lines, did 'more damage than weapons', said Senad Kamenica, Head of the News Service of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Television. But, today Bosnians expect the media to help overcome the nation's problems, by 'building confidence'. In Northern Ireland, the future depends on enabling individuals in the Republican and Unionist communities, to 'engage in the difficult art of dialogue', said William Stainsby, Director of the Cedar Cultural Institute near Derry on the frontier with the Irish Republic. William Smook, South African journalist and Vice Chairman of the Cape Town Press Club believed that 'the media is often at the centre of conflict, acting as part of the problem and part of the solution.'

The importance of the media working with and for the community was again emphasised. Robert Webb, former prominent journalist from the Cincinnati Enquirer, said in this regard: 'The greatest revolution in the media will not be one in technology, but in motive, as we journalists get a new vision of how we are meant to serve as reconcilers rather than exploiters of conflict.'

## 14. London, England: February 1999

Organised jointly by *The Financial Times*, *Channel four* and the ICF, this one day Forum was a powerful one. Very different people were participating from members of the House of the Lords (Lord Nolan was in the chair and Lord Chalfont, Lord Pilkington and Lord Taylor were also attending), editors of *The Observer* (Will Hutton), *The Daily Telegraph* (Charles Moore), *The Guardian* (Alan Rusbridger) and *LM Magazine*, as well as many prominent British and non-British journalists. At the end of the day, the consensus was reached that, yes, the reputation of the media has been damaged all over the world and that only the journalists themselves can try to regain their lost dignity.

Maybe even more importantly, the participants agreed that the collapse of the media would cause the collapse of democracy (or the impossibility to build it where it has still to be done): the reader, the listener or the viewer, who has become weary of the media, which gives priority to sensation and violence, who is deprived of the opportunity of pursuing the truth, turns his back on public affairs, does not vote and, in fact, ceases to be a citizen.

There is no conflict between professionalism and ethics in the media, agreed the speakers. The unethical journalist is the one who is not professional on the job. It is easy to indulge in sensationalism. It doesn't require any homework. On the other hand if you get ready to do the job competently, you will also do it in a thorough and balanced way.

## 15. Londonderry, Northern Ireland and County Mayo, Irish Republic: March 1999

At the conference organised by the North-West Institute for Higher Education in Londonderry, a very moving contribution was made by a first-year media student, Ellen Doherty. 'The information wars keep us busy taking sides,' she said. 'We need to have objective standards that inform the way we report. Our tolerance for violence, moral confusion, inequality and lies is not a precedent we want to perpetuate.'

William Stainsby, President of the Newman Institute in Ballina, County Mayo in the Irish Republic, invited several ICF people to speak at the launching of the new Mayo Centre for Media and Communications.

Michael Smith, Managing editor of London magazine *For a Change*, said journalism has raised public awareness and developed a public conscience towards the great social, moral and ethical issues as well as the great evils confronting humankind.



INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS FORUM  
Kingston, Jamaica April 15-19, 1999

## 16. Kingston, Jamaica: April 1999

This Forum had a particular importance since it was the first in a developing country. The conference was under the distinguished patronage of Sir Howard Cooke, Governor General, who - opening it - stressed that the media have the 'ability to recreate society' and may be 'the key to the solution of some of our problems'.

The Hon. Oliver Clarke, Chairman and Managing editor of *The Gleaner* and former Chairman of the Inter-American Press Association, spoke of the importance of the media being 'credible, fair and accurate' and referred to the tragic number of journalists killed every year for their courage. Desmond Allen, President of the Press Association of Jamaica, emphasised that 'we should not allow society to be victimised by lack of knowledge of what is happening'.

Mr. Ronald Thwaites MP, attorney-at-law and radio interviewer, gave a well-received lunch address. He called for the continuing action of the International Communications Forum in Jamaica and throughout the Caribbean and Central America.

## 17. Caux, Switzerland: July 1999

This Forum was devoted to the formation of journalists for the 21st century. One theme was: 'Talent is fundamental, but then talent for what?' The media is a highly influential force in the world, but what ideas and motivations guide its operatives? Does she or he need a formal qualification to practice? Apart from technical skills, what orientation do Schools of Journalism give to their students? Are ethical values and service concepts relevant and are they sufficiently present in the Schools curriculum?

Dr. Hopeton Dunn, lecturer at the Caribbean Institute of Mass Communication in Jamaica, spoke about the new challenges brought about by the new technologies like the internet. How do we use them as useful new tools to avoid creating other dilemmas, for example that resulting from a very unequal and unjust access to information?

## 18. Caux, Switzerland: August 2000

What is the impact of visual media on the quality of society? Millions of images every day do have a powerful effect, for good or bad, on the minds of the public, and particularly young people. The responsibility of those working in the visual media is therefore paramount. Very often they are people of great talent and imagination, they represent a great potential for good, provided they use their skills to serve balanced information and tempered entertainment.

This Forum took place within the framework of the Caux Conference 'The Arts, catalyst for change'. In a brilliant presentation Rev. Michael Marshall, assistant Bishop of London, pointed out that our only chance is to go back to the Greek ideal of the 'kalonkagaton', the unity of the beautiful and the good. 'Beauty, goodness and truth are a package deal, a Trinitarian or threefold witness to a single reality', said the bishop before adding: 'Information and inspiration belong together.'

## 19. Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina: September–October 2000

As stated in the invitation to this Forum, Sarajevo has become a tragic name in European history – largely due to the dramas that this city has experienced, but also because of the role that the media played, inside Bosnia and Herzegovina, across the Balkans, and world-wide, in making the gap between communities wider, and the hatred more and more irrevocable. In a very symbolic and powerful way, media people from around the world decided to meet in this bruised city and, in an effort to find a heightened sense of responsibility and balance, to commit themselves anew to the service of the public and democracy. Since then the 'Sarajevo Commitment' has been translated into many languages and widely accepted (see also the text of the Commitment and the reactions to it).

## 20. Denver, USA: June 2001

This event initiated by the ICF in association with leading Denver and Colorado media organisations drew participants from across the world. Indeed the thinking and lives of millions the world over are shaped, for better or worse, by the output of American media. That became clear from the Denver discussions by veteran journalists and journalism educators from North America, Europe, Africa, Asia and the Caribbean. They met 'to examine their work and seek new ways to lay the foundations for a sound, sane and sustainable global society'. The choice, William Porter said, is 'between good and evil...between freedom and bondage, between fairness and injustice, between truth and lies, between caring and indifference, between peace and war...'

On this day, which was proclaimed 'The International Communications Forum Day in the City and County of Denver' by Wellington E. Webb, Mayor of Denver, the conference opened by a statement of Lech Walesa, former President of Poland and Nobel prize winner. He emphasised that 'a biased press and a press which manipulates information does not only undermine the trust in the media, but also in the whole system, in the state and democracy'.

Patti Dennis, Vice president and News Director of KUSA-TV, gave a moving report of the traumas she had to face, having to decide in a few seconds what to put on the air during the Columbine school massacre. Terry Anderson, the former Associated Press Beirut bureau chief who spent years as hostage in

Lebanon, spoke about the profit pressure Wall Street exerts on media conglomerates, often at the expense of sound journalism. Anderson said it gets 'harder and harder' to say core journalistic principles won't be violated. He challenged journalists to 'teach those corporate executives that, yes, this is a business but it is more than a business, there is a limit to the amount of profit you can expect to make...because the journalists in the news business are not going to let you bend their principles.'

Roger Parkinson, Chairman of the Canadian Thomson Corp. and President of the World Association of Newspapers, answered however that 'you will not do away with profits and the profit motive for newspapers' and added: 'to bemoan that they are profit-driven and to blame that for preventing the outcomes we desire is a waste of time.' Not so sure, countered Carl Gottlieb, deputy director of the Project for Excellence in Journalism, who called attention to the Project's national study of local television news. The results are striking and show the will of the public to support better journalism.

## 21. Caux, Switzerland: July 2001

This Forum concentrated rather on organisational matters. William Porter expressed the wish to become 'Founder President' and Bernard Margueritte was chosen as 'President'. Robin Williamson took over the responsibilities of Hugh Nowell as Executive Director.

## 22. Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Glasgow: November 2001

University Vice-Chancellors and Heads of Department joined with Lord Provosts, Civic Leaders and sections of the Christian Socialist Movement to host a series of events on 'The Impact of the Media on Society' in the major Scottish cities of Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Glasgow. George Whyte, former Aberdeen City Councillor, was instrumental in this initiative. In each case there was a meeting on the University campuses for students and staff. The International Communications Forum provided speakers and they included Martyn Lewis, former BBC news presenter, Magnus Linklater, feature writer for *The Times* and until recently Chairman of the Scottish Arts Council, Bernard Margueritte, correspondent in Warsaw for the French media, Faustina Starrett, Media and Communications Coordinator at the North West Institute in Londonderry. In Aberdeen





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# Major Themes of the Forums

Each of the ICF's 22 forums has had a main theme and each forum a number of session themes. Some of these are universal and permanent, others correspond to pre-occupations at the time or to geographical areas

In this article six are chosen to represent major and continuing concerns of the media world and its impact on society. They are:

- Freedom and Responsibility
- The Media and a Just and Fair Society
- The Role of Europe
- Ethnic Issues
- True Professionalism
- The Media and Public Confidence

## Freedom and Responsibility

This was the major theme of the first Conference which was held in 1991. It has continued to be a thread throughout the following ten years. Taking the first session of the 1991 event, Gordon Graham, a recent Chairman of the British Publisher's Association, said, 'Each of us, by applying our own senses of freedom and responsibility to abuses in our daily experience, can help to ensure that the printed word, the spoken word and visual forms can convey a balanced picture of the human condition.'

'Each of us ... can help to ensure that the printed word, the spoken word and visual forms can convey a balanced picture of the human condition.'

In the conference which brought together journalists and writers from Russia and the West in Nizhny Novgorod, one delegate remarked, 'In dictatorships and centrally controlled economies you are a hero if you fight for the freedom of the media. But in the democratic world, people who fight for the moral values on which freedom is founded are mocked and ignored.' The point was made strongly that to defeat the lie of Communism or any dictatorship is not sufficient. To secure then a free society, the essential ingredient is integrity and that has to be demonstrated and fought for.

## The Media and a Just and Fair Society

It became quickly apparent in the earlier ICF Conferences and particularly those in Russia and East Europe, that freedom by itself, although primary, was not enough. Freedom and then what? License, bribery, the Mafia, unbridled greed and ambition in business and politics? And all at the cost of the ordinary citizen! And so, the role of the media in creating a just and fair society became an important theme.



It turned out to be a theme that highlighted a major area of hostility, namely that the purpose of media activities was to make money in the context of the market economy, just like any other business, and that they had no social or moral responsibilities. This view was ably promoted at the Australian Conference by Richard Walsh, Chairman of Australian Consolidated Press International, but hotly contested by Rajmohan Gandhi of India who said, 'I cannot for the life of me accept that making money is the sole aim of a newspaper. As a responsible writer I have a duty to present what is being said fairly, but also to do something to reduce hatred and the possibilities of violence.' And Bernard Margueritte, a senior French journalist, added, 'Many of us want to change society and what is wrong with that? Why should we not try to move to a society where moral and spiritual values are at the centre. That is a legitimate thing to attempt and the media should play a role.'

William Porter at another conference stated, 'As media persons we did not come from another planet to report on the last years of a dying civilisation on Earth and then return to whence we came. We are part of this society and would like to build a better world for our loved ones, our children and our grandchildren to live in. We cannot opt out of civilisation.'

'I cannot accept that making money is the sole aim of a newspaper. As a responsible writer I have a duty to present what is being said fairly, but also to do something to reduce hatred and the possibilities of violence.'

## The role of Europe

?

Not forgetting that ICF events have been held in Australia, India, the Caribbean, the USA and Canada, there has, nevertheless, been an emphasis on Europe. Certainly because of its history, but also because of its key and crisis-ridden impact on today. The Conferences in 1996 (Hungary), 1997 (Switzerland) and 1998 (the Czech Republic) had European main themes.

The Hungarian Report began, 'When the Berlin Wall crumbled in 1989 journalists who had operated under the oppression of communism for decades, experienced a feeling of optimism that now they could write in freedom. Seven years later that mood of optimism had been replaced by pressures of financial austerity, political and economic uncertainty and for many the old familiar situation of working for media owners, often foreign, whose news judgement was conditioned by politics or greed.'

The Swiss Conference concentrated on the post-communist challenge to Europe and heard from a remarkable group of young women journalists from Bulgaria, Croatia, Poland and Serbia. Natasha Pejić, from a Belgrade News Agency, summarised, 'Our discussions pinpointed the danger of West and East just switching roles. Since the fall of communism capitalism seems to be attempting to incorporate the humanistic aspects of socialist doctrine. Whilst former communist countries, in a desperate struggle to recreate their world, are blindly discarding every aspect of their own tradition and praying only to the God of the market economy. These two processes could even lead to a more humane world and that will depend on whether we have a true exchange of experience. With the Berlin Wall gone, such an exchange could dissolve

the walls in our mindset. The Forum does precisely that.'

An article in *The Prague Post* on the Czech Conference, concluded, 'We are not merely building a Europe devoted to defending its own interests and living standards, but one primarily committed to establishing the values of civilisation and a fairness of distribution that will benefit the whole world.'

### Ethnic issues

'Class hate as an ideology is behind us. But ethnic hate is with us and is ahead of us.

Who will now expose the illogicality of ethnic enmity?

Who will report and interpret reconciliation and forgiveness?'

The tone was set for ICF's approach to ethnic conflict by Rajmohan Gandhi, author and research fellow at the New Delhi Centre for Policy Studies, in the second conference in Caux. He said, 'Class hate as an ideology is behind us. But ethnic hate is with us and is ahead of us. Who will now expose the illogicality of ethnic enmity? Who will disentangle the love of one's own people, which is a great quality, from disliking of another people? Who will report and interpret reconciliation and forgiveness? Ethnic enmity wins applause and votes and primeministerships. Many so-called patriots and nationalists say that you cannot love your own people unless you hate other people. It is an obvious folly. Part of the role of communications is to unseat this folly from the minds and hearts of the millions of the world.'

The ICF has 'walked the talk' and held or taken part in events that promoted Gandhi's challenge. In Canada there was a Symposium on the Media and Ethnicity with a particularly strong Moslem presence, as well as persons from Quebec and the Peoples of the First Nations. It was later reported that the Canadian media gave a lot of space and time to explaining Islam and Moslem aspirations in the weeks following the symposium. And the ICF has been associated with activities in the ethnic hot spots of Northern Ireland, South Africa, Bosnia and the Naga Region of North-East India.

These actions culminated in the Sarajevo 2000 Media World Assembly in which Senad Kamenica of Bosnian Television played a leading role. His vision was that 'Sarajevo, which had been a city of shame in the 20th Century could become a beacon of hope for the 21st Century'. The Assembly issued The Sarajevo Commitment, a key document for the media's world-uniting role, described elsewhere in this Report.

### True professionalism

In an early Position Paper the ICF had a section on Quality and Professionalism. It stated, 'The Forum is concerned with the quality of the media's output - quality in its impact on society as well as its creation. It is equally concerned with professionalism, with doing one's work to the maximum of one's talent, training and job commitment. It believes that the true professional is paying attention to the effect of what he is writing or portraying upon others. We are not operating in a vacuum. Even when we reach a mass audience, we affect each

person individually.'

Professor Claude-Jean Bertrand of the Press Institute of the University of Paris II proposed nine objectives for the media professional. They were: competence, which implies being ready to correct mistakes; independence from all political, economic and publicity-seeking influences; seeking to win the public's confidence; to have an open-minded approach to what is really news, which means looking for the truth behind a story; giving a precise and explained view of a news item; to stimulate communication between groups; serving the public as a whole (accepting a pluralism; of viewpoints); the defence and promotion of human dignity; and, finally, making an effort to build a better society.

Bernard Margueritte, French media correspondent in Poland, speaking at a 1997 Forum said, 'It is more difficult to work as a responsible journalist with a sense of mission, than to be a rudderless hack. There is no true professionalism in journalism without moral values.'

'It is more difficult to work as a responsible journalist with a sense of mission, than to be a rudderless hack. There is no true professionalism in journalism without moral values.'

## The media and public confidence

During the last decade of the 20th Century a sea-change took place in media attitudes. From being rather indifferent as to the public's opinion of its ethical standards or lack of them, it steadily became more self-critical in the light of a declining public confidence. In polls related to the trust of the public in various business and professional activities it began to hit very low scores averaging around 15 per cent. In an Australian poll in 1997 it achieved only seven per cent with politicians just nosing ahead with eight per cent. The only activity below them was second-hand car dealing. These results were also borne out by much anecdotal evidence voicing unbelief in and downright hostility to media professionals. Particularly, key players in the United States media began to voice their concern and one practical consequence was the emergence of the Committee of Concerned Journalists to resist the idea of 'infotainment' and 'If it bleeds, it leads' developments in news presentation.

The ICF felt that it was well placed to work to restore public confidence and this purpose held a major place in its end-of-the-decade events, notably a one-day conference on the theme hosted by *The Financial Times* and other sponsors in early 1999. It was attended by more than one hundred of Britain's media leaders, including eight national editors, top columnists and senior persons in television and the radio. An international element was added by the interventions of leading figures from Australia, France and the USA. Lord Nolan the Law Lord, who had headed the British Government's Committee on Standards in Public Life, chaired the Conference. He summed up the ideals creating public goodwill as 'honesty, openness, accountability, integrity, leadership and selflessness'. 'To achieve this', he added, 'courage was a very necessary quality for journalists, as well as humour, humility and a sense of proportion.'•

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# Press comments

## and opinions about the ICF

There have been over the ten years period literally hundred of press comments about the ICF and many letters have been received. We are presenting here a small part of those, eliminating in principle, among others, articles written by key ICF people themselves.

*Press 2000:* (Journal of the London Press Club) No.6 Winter 2000/1:

'Mr. Porter revealed that when he retired as a successful publisher, one of the things he feared most was that his peers would reject or ridicule him. His life had been one of making money and achieving personal prominence. Then he began questioning the role of the communications industry and his place in it...William Porter was torn by the dilemma of wanting to put things right and the fear of what the reaction of his former colleagues might be. Would they laugh at him and reject his views?... "in the event, no one laughed and I realised that many people shared my concerns", he said.'

**... torn by the dilemma of wanting to put things right and the fear of what the reaction of former colleagues might be.**

*Nizhegorodskaia Pravda*, Russia, (September 15, 1993):

'The Forum exists as a union of colleagues and friends from various countries who work in the mass media and strive to make the world free and just. The Forum is for freedom of creative expression, which must be combined with a deeper sense of responsibility for any reader, viewer or listener.'

*A Smetanin*

*Nizhny Novgorod Times*, Russia, (September 1993):

'Several Russian participants (at the forum) had a 'communist record', working as editors-in-chief of local official (read- communist) newspapers just at the time when Andrei Sakharov was in exile in Nizhny Novgorod (then Gorki). They probably did not chat easily with Victor Sparre, who furthered the candidacy of Sakharov for the Nobel Peace Prize, but the very fact that they took part in this Forum is very promising.'

*Vladimir Sedov, editor-in-chief*

*The Times Higher Educational Supplement*, (September 15, 1993):

'The focus of ICF is the need for a sense of personal responsibility...If, as is increasingly happening across the world, the media have the power to shape social values, then they will need to develop their own discretion about what to print or to show.'

*Dr Philip Boobbyer*

*The New Straits Times*, Malaysia,  
(November 3, 1993):

'What sort of cultural environment has the media offered the world in recent decades? What is the media handing over to the 21st century? Two fundamental questions that are being asked and discussed by a small but growing group that calls itself the International Communications Forum.

The widely held notion that the media's role is simply to give people what they want to read, see or hear is being knocked and new thinking on its role is gaining ground. Sex, violence and crime—are these really what people want as part of their media diet? Surveys have shown that this is not so but then what accounts for the circulation figures and profusion of films with these very themes?' *P.C. Shivadas*

**'New thinking on the role of  
the media in the 21st  
century gains ground'**

*The Indian Express* (February 23, 1997):

'In today's world, where opinion polls in USA and UK have shown that journalists tend to come very low in public esteem and are generally known to be "unscrupulous, imaginative with truth, opinionated and arrogant" William Porter, a leading publishing magnate based in France is endeavouring to refurbish this tarnished image...While Porter hopes that leading press associations of India will soon hold an international meet of the ICF, he will be visiting Australia after his Indian tour is complete for another international meet of the ICF, for promoting "positive, and responsible journalism".'

*Vinita Deshmukh*

**'Towards positive and  
responsible media'**

*The Age*, Australia (April 3, 1997):  
After the ICF conference in Sydney

'Richard Walsh, the chairman of Australian Consolidated Press, said the assumption from Martyn Lewis's argument is that people want something different from what the media are providing. One of the virtues of capitalism, he said, was that it created the media people want. And out in the real world, people were happy with what they were getting...I am not as confident as Richard Walsh that everyone is happy with what the media are giving them. And even if they were, and if that you can never go broke underestimating the taste of the public is true, and even if it sounds elitist, I believe the media have an obligation to raise people's sights, not lower them. "Why should the media be better than society as a whole?" a French journalist, Bernard Margueritte, asked the forum. "Because it has the power it has, it should try".'

*Pamela Bone*

**'Media obliged to raise,  
not lower, people's  
sights'**



**'Forum to change media industry from within'**

*The Star*, Toronto, (March 21, 1998):

'The thing Bill Porter feared most, when his life changed direction, was that his peers would reject or ridicule him. He was one of Britain's most successful publisher...but eight years ago he started questioning the role of the communications industry and his place in it...From what he has seen, Canadian journalists tend to steer clear of the worst excesses of sensationalism. But they also show less interest in analyzing their own performance than their counterparts in Europe and the US. "Perhaps there's a bit of self-righteousness," Porter observed. That was as close as he came to being critical. "I would never tell a fellow professional what to do," he stressed. "I'm just a case study of a media executive who changed his motives".'

*Carol Goar*

**'The media and public confidence— There is no question of a social order without moral order, as there is no question of a free society without a free exchange of information...'**

*The Gleaner*, Jamaica, (April 22, 1999):

After the Jamaican forum

'The ICF operates on the simple premise that change in one person makes a difference to systems and societies...A point which kept coming up is that media persons have no moral right to pursue and expose immoral, improper and illegal actions in others when they themselves stand in breach of the same principles.'

*Martin Henry*

*The Guardian*, (February 8, 1999):

after the forum at the *Financial Times* building

'This anxiety about market freedom permeated a series of debates about ethical standards, under the rather portentous title The Media and Public Confidence, organised by a group of concerned journalists (the ICF) and hosted by the *Financial Times*. Sprinkled with peers and media heavy-hitters, along with assorted academics, lawyers and politicians, it proved to be an unusually absorbing opportunity to watch numerous supporters of modern capitalism recoil at the culture it has spawned.'

*Roy Greenslade*

**'A crusader urges the media to raise morals'**

*The Christian Science Monitor*, (November 24, 1999):

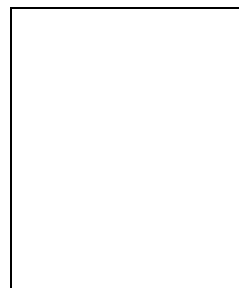
'From his home in France, William Porter travels 200 days out of the year, a sort of Johnny Appleseed of International Journalism. He tries to plant seeds of responsibility in media everywhere so they will cut back on the infotainment and negativism. "Reach higher", implores Mr. Porter, one of the founders of the International Communications Forum, "and take the public with you"'

*David Holmstrom*

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# Comments from media practitioners

The ICF, created and lead by Bill Porter and his happy, caring band of co-conspirators, has undertaken a task as noble as it is difficult: to navigate between the fanatic media haters and the see-no-evil media defenders to raise legitimate questions about the effects of media on society and what can be done about them. How to do this with an uncensored media and that needs to earn profits to stay independent and free is the challenge that Bill and the ICF have taken up.

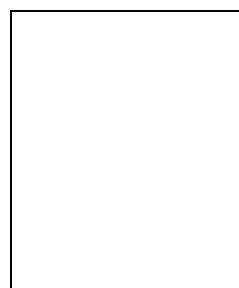


What is amazing to me is how much success they have had operating on a shoestring, but with great energy and enthusiasm. ICF is starting to get the worlds attention and has begun to get the issues defined and accepted. Now the challenge for the ICF, it seems to me, is how to get action. Will converting single individuals working in media organizations be enough to get those organizations to change? If not, what should ICF's strategy be to be as effective in the next ten years as it has been in the first ten.

The world and the independent and free media everywhere owe a great debt of gratitude to the tireless, unselfish work of Bill Porter and all the members of the ICF.

**Roger Parkinson**, President of the world association of newspapers; former chairman, publisher and CEO of the *Globe and Mail*, Canada's national newspaper; former publisher and president of the *Minneapolis Star-Tribune*

I have been involved with ICF for several years by now, as I am convinced that the Media are the most powerful tool for better or for worse, for shaping public attitudes, moral standards and an overall atmosphere in societies. Sadly the influence of the Media in recent decades seems to be far worse. I share the belief of William Porter, the initiator of the Forum, that power should be accompanied by a sense of responsibility. The searchfor truth that many journalists aim for is no doubt laudable yet one would wish that some of them should search not only for negative, but also for positive truth that would encourage and inspire the public. I am, though, mostly concerned with entertainment in the media, which exerts influence not only in the Euro-Atlantic space but also in the third world, and which, mainly in films and videos, presents too frequently a distorted image of society in the developed countries and at the same time distorting basic values in our world.'



**Senator Jaroslava Moserova**,  
President of the General Conference of UNESCO

I met ICF colleagues for the first time in 1993 when a large group of Forum participants arrived in Nizhny Novgorod. Since then we have met in Caux, Moscow and Sarajevo.

One of the main ICF achievements, in my opinion, is systematic analysis of the state of things in modern journalism.

Wherever there are ICF, a serious and debatable discussion about a journalist's responsibility is sure to take place. As I see it, this is what distinguishes IFC activities.

Under ICF influence we held a number of seminars on professional ethics in journalism in Nizhny Novgorod. We understand that it is very important for young journalists to discuss these problems and to know about elder colleague's experience.

Those of my colleagues, who have been at the Assembly in Sarajevo, came back amazed at the awareness of that real professional and human responsibility that a journalist, who 'takes' people to barricades or gives them unreliable information, has to bear.

**Natalia Skvortsova,**  
President, Russian Journalists Union, Nizhny Novgorod

Like the members of the ICF and the journalists gathered in Sarajevo, we at the Committee of Concerned Journalists are vitally interested in the state of journalism in the world and of the need for greater support for those journalists who pursue the highest standards in their work. There is no better place to focus on these standards than in the city whose journalists taught us all we need know about courage and commitment during the siege of Sarajevo. Civilization has produced one idea more powerful than any other and that is the notion that people can govern themselves. And it has created a theory of information called journalism to sustain that idea. The two rise and fall together. Please extend...the wishes of us at the CCJ for a successful meeting which will continue to strengthen the solidarity of the world's journalists committed to the service of democratic societies'.

**Bill Kovach,** Chairman of the Committee  
of concerned Journalists, Washington D.C.



I remember when Bill first aired his vision and am amazed at what has happened since. Progress has not been due to high-powered organisation or lavish endowment. Bill's family bereavement, his own illnesses and his financial sacrifices have been the background.

When Bill and I went to Belgrade in 1992 the situation seemed hopeless. Yugoslavia was disintegrating. Yet now we have the Sarajevo Manifesto, an international beacon of hope, with Balkan representatives participating fully. War Crime Tribunals are one thing; but when professionals start admitting their own need to change, that's another. For a diplomat, it's challenging.

**Archie Mackenzie**, former UK Ambassador

As a publisher I was always interested in the power of the word. The extensive burning of books throughout history stands as testimony to its potency. A more visible attack on its influence is hard to imagine. Conversely, reverence of the word is also a thread deeply enmeshed in our shared history. For me the International Communications Forum has been an opportunity to meet with people who take the power of the word seriously and employ this understanding as a positive force in society. Now, of course, we think in multimedia terms and the power of communications. ICF has brought many people across the whole spectrum of media together, offering a supportive hand to brave people often working in politically hostile circumstances, and serving as a constant reminder to us to remain vigilant.'

**Frances Pinter**

Two things make the ICF different from the hundreds of other media organizations around the world.

1. It is global in its vision and universal in its outreach. It extends the definition of 'communicator' to embrace all who express themselves to the public through the written or spoken word, through drama and song, through the visual arts.
2. It puts the responsibility on the individual communicator to reflect standards and values that will build a healthy sustainable society; and it expects individuals - from the reporter on the police beat to the media owners, from the song writer to the painter and sculptor, from the ad salesman to the movie actor - to demonstrate those values in their daily lives.

**Henry Heald**, Journalist, Canada

**I**n the rush to meet daily deadlines, beat the competition and stay on top of events, it is easy for a journalist to lose sight of what really matters. Most of us start with high hopes of making a difference, serving the public, shining a light on injustice and need, and stimulating informed debate. But over time, weariness and cynicism creep in. Commercial pressures intrude.

The International Communications Forum is a refuge from those corrosive forces. It gives journalists who want to hang on their ideals a place to meet and find strength.

My involvement with the Forum has helped give me the courage to live by the values that brought me into this business in the first place.

**Carol Goar**, Editorial page editor, *The Toronto Star*

**T**he role of ICF in the next 3-5 years must include the establishment of a visible formidable presence in the developing countries of Africa and Asia where most of the world's people reside and, ipso facto, where many ICF ideals and mandates, in particular the Sarajevo Commitment, can potentially impact more people.

Today, the former sharp divide between the media of the 'North' and the media of the 'South' is giving way to a new arrangement where media practitioners from the south actively shape the way we see and interpret events portrayed on CNN, BBC, SKY, etc.

Consequently, news reporting has become a potent catalyst for positive change in many developing countries. This is the good part. But there is a lesser-known fact, too: abuse on the part of media practitioners who have created a new subset of journalism which pays little attention or respect to ethics. For the practitioners of Crusading Journalism, as this craft is called, the end justifies the means. Misinformation, lies and disinformation are all fair game in the pursuit of ends that have little to do with service to citizens and societies. This is a trend that ICF must challenge and redress in the near future.

**Yinka Adeyemi**,  
Columnist, Daily Times of Nigeria

**I**want to commend your dream of building a more sturdy moral underpinning for the practice of journalism and communications around the world. I trust that your vision and energy will be catching, and that the dialogue conducted in Sarajevo will be carried forward until all who take up the pen or lens have had to consider most seriously the potential and the obligations of their craft'.

**John D. Hopkins**, Chairman of the International Journalism Committee, Society of Professional Journalists, Miami



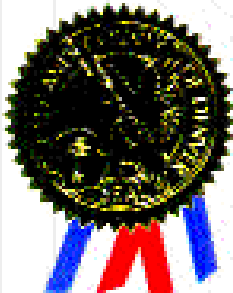
## Proclamation

- WHEREAS:** "American Media and the World Community" is the theme of the International Communications Forum (ICF) conference being in the City and County of Denver May 17-21, 2001; and
- WHEREAS:** The ICF is a growing, world wide network of media people who recognize that they have the power to influence society for good or ill and who want to play their part in building a less corrupt infinitely more compassionate world; and
- WHEREAS:** Those who share in the Forum's work are ready to practice in their own lives the standards of honesty and integrity which this high vision of media calling demands; and
- WHEREAS:** The Forum's aim is to raise standards in every part of the media and to promote courageous and creative work which will inform, inspire and entertain the public; and
- WHEREAS:** On behalf of the citizens of Denver, I offer our best wishes for a successful ICF Conference.

*NOW, THEREFORE, I, WELLINGTON E. WELLS, MAYOR OF THE City and County of Denver, Colorado, by virtue of the authority usual in me, do hereby officially proclaim Friday, May 18, 2001 as:*

### *International Communications Forum Day in the City and County of Denver*

*IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the official seal of the City and County of Denver to be affixed this Friday, May 18, 2001.*



*Wellington E. Wells*  
MAYOR

# THE SARAJEVO COMMITMENT

*At the beginning of the 21st Century men and women of the media register their commitment to integrity and Public service. This document was launched at the World Media Assembly, SARAJEVO 2000, and signed by participants on 30 September 2000.*

**W**e, men and women of the media – professionals at all levels, from publishers and producers to cub reporters and students of journalism; from the print and digital media, television and radio, book publishing, cinema and theatre, advertising and public relations, music and the performing and creative arts—met here in the bruised, historic and beautiful city of Sarajevo, pay our homage and respect to the millions of humanity whom we inform, entertain and educate.

We look back on a century of brilliance and bloodshed, of amazing technological advance and distressing human misery, of mobility and isolation and of healing and hatred. A century in which two world wars emanated from the so-called advanced and civilised continent of Europe. A century in which we split the atom, but left families, communities and nations divided. A century which ended with some 30 unresolved major conflict situations.

We accept that we in the media, whilst talent and technology enabled us to reach the lives of almost every last person in the world, were not able to create the climate in which problems were solved, conflicting groups and interests reconciled, and peace and justice established.

Now that we confront a new century, many of us, hoping that we interpret the views and feelings of the vast majority of our colleagues, would like to establish a commitment, an undertaking, a pledge, to all those who will live and love and work in these coming hundred years.

We shall inform you to the best of our ability with clarity and honesty, with independence of mind, of what is truly happening in the world at the level of the individual, the family, the community, the nation and the region. We shall present the facts and explain the facts, and some of us will aim with modesty to interpret them. As we succeed in doing this, we believe that you, the people, will be enabled to make the right decisions, to elect and appoint the best leaders and to build a fair, just and compassionate society.

We seek a world in which everyone cares enough and everyone shares enough so that everyone will have enough; a world in which the work and wealth of the world are available to all at the exploitation of none.

We shall provide the art and entertainment which will inspire, arouse and give hope and a sense of direction to all humanity. We shall be working to raise up and not to drag down. We shall challenge our politicians to work for the next generation and not the next election, encourage our governments to make agreements which are effective in people's hearts as well as on paper; and stimulate our business, industrial and labour leaders to meet the material needs of humankind with fairness and equity.

We shall work to educate, through all the means of communication, generations who will be able to confront the challenges of their age with competence and vision.

We shall combine freedom with responsibility, talent with humility, privilege with service, comfort

with sacrifice and concern with courage. We realise that change in society begins with change in ourselves.

We undertake to apply and demonstrate in our own lives the values that we hope for, and often demand, in others. We shall confront hypocrisy, oppression, exploitation and evil, firstly by our own clarity and straightness and then through the means by which we reach our audiences. We are unlikely to be perfect, but we shall aim to be truthful and free of guile, selfish ambition, perverted behaviour and deception.

We shall not cease to strive until every gun is silent, every injustice righted and every human being enabled to live a life of satisfaction and purpose.

To all these intentions and obligations, we commit ourselves at this time of beginning. May the higher aspirations within us all, be they spiritual, moral or humanistic, enable us to fulfil this commitment.

## An evaluation of the Sarajevo Commitment

Issued at the final session of the World Media Assembly in Sarajevo in September, 2000, the Commitment which bears its name has been working like yeast throughout the media community. It has already been translated into 17 languages including Japanese, Hindi, Russian, Arabic and Albanian. Another 12 are in preparation.

**Martyn Lewis**, the British TV presenter, has been using it in full in his public speaking engagements, including to 600 educators in the North of England and to 300 senior executives in Nairobi, Kenya. In each case he said that it was received with strong applause and that he was snowed under by the demand for copies.

**Jay Rosen**, Professor of Journalism at New York University, says of it, 'I find it moving, highly eloquent and a document of historical importance'. At a journalists' conference in Denver, Colorado, he compared it with the Gettysburg Address and the United Nations Charter of Human Rights - a statement of its time, but illuminating the future. It pledges signers to the highest ethical and performance standards. It binds them in a compact with those they serve. It should be a lighthouse for journalists everywhere.

The woman President of the Ghana Journalists Association has sent a copy to each of her members. It won a Special Commendation at the National Awards Day of the Jamaica Press Association. It was pub-

lished in full in *An-Nahar*, the Lebanon's leading Arabic daily, which reaches most of the Middle East capitals. It has been promoted by the Journalists Union of Nizhny Novgorod, Russia's third city.

**Ignacio Ramonet**, Director of *Le Monde Diplomatique*, France's influential political review, described the Commitment as 'the ecology of information'. **Professor Francis Balle** of the French Press Institute signed the document on the spot and said that he would get a copy to all his students.

The Commitment was available to delegates at the Year 2000 National Convention of the American Society of Professional Journalists in Columbus, Ohio, and distributed at the SPJ Mid-Atlantic regional conference in Ocean City, Maryland in Spring 2001. A key executive of the Washington DC based Catholic News Service was so struck by the document that he said he would promote it at the national convention of Catholic editors.

The message of the Commitment inspired the Lord Provost of Aberdeen to initiate a symposium, in cooperation with the city's Robert Gordon's University, on the Media and its impact on Society, which led to similar civic-university inspired events in Edinburgh and Glasgow. All those who took part received a copy and many media people signed it.

Almost every day news comes in of how the Commitment is being used to inspire constructive journalism and to regain the confidence of the public.

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# Looking Forward

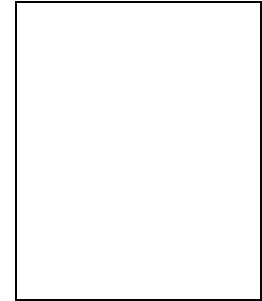
by Bernard Margueritte

If I accepted in July 2001 to become not so much 'the President' as 'a President' of the ICF (thanks to God, William Porter is still with us as the Founder President), one of the main reasons to embark on this new adventure was my conviction that what was started 10 years ago has to be continued. So much has been achieved during those 10 years! The ICF organised 22 conferences in all parts of the world. The Sarajevo Commitment, translated and commended in many countries, has become the Magna Carta of the media at the beginning of the XXI century.

What do we want? We still want the media first to stop perverting the people and particularly the young. Secondly, to serve modestly and with integrity the citizen, providing him with unbiased, honest and balanced information, so that he can be able to know what is happening around him and in the world and thus to make up his own mind. Then and only then can democracy work. Thirdly, we want the media to support all the positive initiatives in the world, aiming at enhancing the dignity of each human being and bringing social justice. Thus we hope to help build the civilisation of respect for human dignity.

With whom do we intend to reach those goals? Obviously with the media professionals, who are more and more attracted by the ICF and, worldwide, show a growing awareness of their responsibility for the future of democracy and society. Also with the public, who at the same time indicate more strongly that they want to be treated with respect and consideration and are beginning to mark their preference for good programmes and honest publications. We don't want to exclude either the possibility of dialogue with the media owners, who are playing such a tremendous role in today's world. They also are human beings, they also have a conscience, they also can care about the future of the world.

We will then continue to organise or co-organise conferences around the world, everywhere where we feel that media people are in quest for a change. We will never come to compel anyone, but will try to learn from each other. We will also have a series of new initiatives. The ICF is represented in 116 countries so far. We have to make proper use of this world wide network, second-to-none in the media field. We will organise exchanges of journalists between high-quality publications. We will launch 'the Sonja Porter Award' for young journalists showing that they are in their work respecting the ICF principles. We will, in co-operation with a media research centre in the UK, organise and interpret with our local representatives all around the world comparative surveys about the state of the media and the relationship between the media and the public. The knowledge provided by those surveys will be of tremendous help to improve our media.



... we hope to help build the civilisation of respect for human dignity.



Work has already started to build a team of high-level teachers of journalism and practitioners from various countries and continents that will provide workshops of service-oriented, professional training for journalists wherever the need for such is felt. We now have a greatly improved web site, that is becoming in fact a source for world wide information on the media. Other initiatives will follow.

That is to say that the ICF cannot anymore live without a strong budget. During the first ten years we had, before each conference, to find appropriate funding and hope that a foundation or an institution would help. Providence indeed looked always upon us and made sure that our goals could be reached. Now, however, taking into account the range of activities we are starting, we need (without rejecting of course the continuing help of Providence) to be better organised and better financed. We are therefore starting, at this beginning of a new decade, a broad fund-raising operation, aiming to get the support, on a regular basis, of foundations, international organisations and media companies.

We believe that the time is right to move to this new stage of the ICF's development. This is exciting but also not without dangers. We don't want the ICF to become a huge, bureaucratic institution. There can be no doubt that, as long as I will be the President, the ICF will remain faithful to the spirit of the founders. Our effort to improve the media will still be, above all, a person-to-person and conscience-to-conscience approach. You can count on that.

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At this new stage of development, however, the success of ICF will not depend mainly on what the President and the Founder President do. We will continue to ensure a co-ordination of our efforts, but this has to be a more and more decentralised operation. We will succeed only if many in the media feel truly concerned about our common work. The ICF belongs to all those involved.

Each one has a role to play, initiative to propose, activity to undertake. We have now a solid executive committee, impressive vice-presidents and regional representatives with a vastly enlarged role. But this is not enough. I urge everyone to become truly committed.

We have a splendid statement of our principles; the Sarajevo Commitment. Let every one of us reflect on how she or he can implement those principles in her/his own life and work. We should, modestly but passionately, try to be, not in words but in deeds, examples. We will fail most of the time. But we have to show the light, even if it is a faltering and uncertain light. If not us, then who? If not now, then when?

As a matter of fact, I can tell you: if the new ICF fails – but we don't think for a moment that this could happen – it would be my own failure, but if it succeeds it will be fully and totally the success of everyone participating in the ICF's work. They are, you are, the ICF. Every one of us is the richness of the ICF. •



# Information on accessing the ICF

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**Website**<http://www.icforum.org>

## Financial Contributions

Here is a list of suggested ways of making your donation.  
**For addresses, please refer above.**

**In sterling:** Please send your cheque made out to 'International  
Communications Forum', or to ICF Ltd, to our Appeals Secretary,  
**Mrs Margaret Foyle**, 28 Gordon Avenue, Chichester, West Sussex,  
PO19 2QY, UK.

**In Euros:** Please send your cheque made out to **M Jean-Jacques Odier**.

**In the USA:** Please send your check payable to 'C.I.G.R.' marked for the use  
with ICF and send to **Mr Robert Webb**. (C.I.G.R. stands for Caux Institute for  
Global Responsibility)

**In Canada:** Please send your check made out to **Mr Henry Heald**.

**In Australia:** Please send your cheque made out to **Mr John Williams**.

**From the rest of the world:** Please send your cheque in your OWN  
CURRENCY made out to 'International Communications Forum' to **Mrs  
Margaret Foyle**, address as above. Please add the equivalent of £10 sterling to  
cover bank charges.