

A close-up, profile photograph of Ryszard Kapuściński, an elderly man with glasses and a white shirt, looking thoughtfully to the right. His hands are clasped together in front of him, and he is wearing a metal watch on his left wrist. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

R Y S Z A R D  
**KAPUŚCIŃSKI**

THE FIVE  
SENSES OF  
JOURNALISM

Being, seeing, hearing, sharing, thinking

UNOFFICIAL ENGLISH TRANSLATION



New Journalism Collection

Workshop book series

Foundation for a New Latin-American Journalism

# The Five Senses of Journalism

Being, Seeing, Hearing, Sharing, Thinking

Ryszard Kapuscinski

UNOFFICIAL ENGLISH TRANSLATION

By [Robert O'Connor](#)

Originally published in 2003 as “[Los Cinco Sentidos Del Periodista \(estar, ver, oir, compartir, pensar\)](#)” by La Fundacion Para Un Nuevo Periodismo Iberoamericano

This is a Google translation of the original, with some minor edits and clarifications. The original also contained typographical errors that have been corrected in this one and I have added some explanatory footnotes for those wishing to pursue any of these topics further. I am not fluent in Spanish and will not pretend this book is anything else. This is available for educational purposes and in the hopes that a Spanish translator will create a real one and have it published by one of the publishing houses that publish English translations of Kapuscinski's work, which are listed below. The copy I translated from was put online by Santiago Real de Azua on the website of the Inter-American Development Bank, where he served as the Chief of the Press Office. It does not have a copyright notice on it, but if the copyright is owned by Fundacion Para Un Nuevo Periodismo Iberoamericano or another party, please contact me and I will immediately take this down.

# List of publishing houses who translate Kapuscinski's work

## **Australia**

Allen & Unwin  
83 Alexander Ln,  
Crows Nest NSW  
Australia

## **Canada**

Penguin Random House Canada  
320 Front St. W #1400  
Toronto, ON M5V 3B6  
Canada

## **United Kingdom**

Penguin Books Ltd.  
20 Vauxhall Bridge Road  
London, SW1V 2SA  
United Kingdom

## **United States**

Random House  
1745 Broadway  
New York, NY 10019  
United States

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### **FORWARD**

In November 1994 Gabriel Garcia Marquez\* summoned a group of friends in Cartagena de Indias and told them about the poorness that afflicted South American journalism. "When I started in that trade," he said, "I had great teachers who did not forgive me an adjective out of place. Now young people write haphazardly. Nobody has time to teach them."

Thus the idea of the Foundation for a New Journalism and the idea of its workshops were born, which nine years later added up to hundreds. The lesson of the Foundation's teachers remained in the memory and in the notes of the young people who attended these courses, and were transformed into some of the best writing that have appeared in the newspapers of the continent. The workshops remained, however, infinite riches abandoned in the cemeteries of the recorders, videos or more or less faithful reporters that reflected them.

A year ago, we said that the initial mission of the Foundation could radiate through books that were available to journalists who had not attended the workshops and readers interested in the complex mix of talent, risk, research and awareness that moves behind the writing of the news. The plan for a collection of books to become four series: Workshop, books, essays, anthologies, and dialogues, which will appear four or five times per year, thanks to the hospitality and community of intellectual interests that unite the Foundation with the Economic Fund Culture. In this first volume of the workshops, one of the greatest journalists of the last half century, Ryszard Kapuscinski, concentrates on the wisdom of a trade that is mixed with life itself. Those same reasons and passions will be the common seal we are sure of all the books from the collection.

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **PORTRAIT OF AN ENCOUNTER**

**ÓSCAR ESCAMILLA<sup>†</sup>**

I met Ryszard Kapuscinski in October 2002. I saw him in the lobby of a luxury hotel in the center of Buenos Aires when he left the elevator. He was wearing a light blue short-sleeved t-shirt, denim pants that were so deep blue that they were almost gray and black tie-down shoes of a schoolboy design. He walked towards those of us in the waiting room and greeted us with the affection of

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\* Gabriel Garcia Marquez (1927-2014) was one of the leading Latin American novelists in the 1960s and 70s, winning the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1982. He is best known for his novels "Love in the Time of Cholera" and "One Hundred Years of Solitude." He began his career as a journalist and was an admirer of Ryszard Kapuscinski, whom he called "Maestro."

† Oscar Escamilla (b. 1969) is a Columbian Journalist currently a correspondent for ANSA, the leading news wire service in Italy.

lifelong friends.

I was anxious to see how Kapuscinski was physically, as many readers had also molded at will the image and personality of one of my favorite writers. By then I had already read the only books of his translated into Spanish: "The Emperor", "Imperium", "the Soccer War," "The Shah of Shahs" and one more, a collection of talks he gave in Italy called *Cynics*\* which are not useful for the trade. In this way, the image he had of Kapuscinski was referred to the photos on the back covers of his books, and his writing and that way of seeing the world. But now that I had it in front of me, I noticed that I was older than in those photos and that in his gray eyes there was a particular expression.

It was a changing, almost chameleonic look. Sometimes he fixed it on his interlocutor while examining it from top to bottom and from bottom to top, as if it were the requirement of an airport security expert; then he stopped his eyes in the other's and paid attention to what he said. If a fascinating story emerged in the talk, Kapuscinski's gaze turned as a child and flashed with pure amazement. For a moment he looked away from who he was talking to and, without losing the conversation, he stuck them in any other. Then he lowered his head, raised his eyebrows and looked over his glasses to say, without saying it "Do you understand what it says? It's true that it's interesting." Then he smiled. There was a moment when he focused his gaze on a scene with such force that with it he could go through the metal door of a vault to know what was inside. And on other occasions, as happen at the end of the workshop, his eyes could reflect the fireworks inside him when they surprised him with a question or with an act that removed his feelings

But I didn't look only at his eyes: also at his little feet. I was not the only one. Someone would tell me later that I had not imagined that a man whose life was spent mostly walking the world had such small feet. I had a hard time figuring that white man advancing with those little feet towards the row of black children collecting water at the end of a miserable neighborhood in Lagos. Or recently arriving at the airport and on the way to the center of Vorkuta, in Russia, swaying in a bus crowded with people so wrapped in fur coats, to protect themselves from the cold, that they looked like cocoons swaying tightly that occasionally stepped on it.

Unlike most of his readers, I had the opportunity to expand my vision of the writer, and he never ceased to amaze me. I remember that the day I met him in the hotel lobby, after greeting Kapuscinski returned to his room to wear a khaki baseball cap and dark glasses that he adjusted on top of his glasses. With that outfit he joined the group that was going to watch a football match on the Boca Juniors court, La Bombonera†. When he returned, someone told him that in Buenos Aires they kidnapped a lot "but a lot!" According to the news offices of press agencies and the television notes he had seen. When the person stopped complaining about Argentine insecurity, Kapuscinski took her by the forearm and turned until they were both facing a window through which the street was visible. Then the teacher raised his right hand and, drawing his fingers together, he drew the framer: "Surely he said if one looks for a while through that window, he will see the kidnappings you say...If you see any, do not hesitate to report it."

This would be the first of a series of lessons that the teacher would give us throughout the

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\* "A Cynic Wouldn't Suit This Profession: Conversations About Good Journalism," published in 2000 by Adelphi Edizioni. This book has not been translated into English.

† Officially Estadio Alberto J. Armando

workshop for Latin American reporters, which is why we were in Buenos Aires. The following ones were distributed in rations for each of the 16 journalists, the four listeners and the guests that we met with him the second week of October. In the five days the teacher talked about globalization, about the origins of the new journalism, about the mestizo way of telling where all genres seem to mix, about Kapuscinski's method of work in writing "The Emperor," about the dignity of the reporter, and about respect for The Other who decides to open the door of his house to tell us about his life. He answered the questions we asked him and attended with interest the stories of each participant on how he made the text he presented in the workshop. At lunch he told us stories and listened to ours, and gave us a good amount of books to read.

He said goodbye to us with tears in his eyes on a hot Friday after we all wrote him messages and signed the white shirt he was wearing. Surprised that they just gave him a gift he didn't expect. After a short intervention to talk about local journalism, he closed the workshop saying in a broken voice: "I hope we meet on future occasions. Thank you very much!" Those of us who stood their got up from our seats and applauded him for a long time, some crying excitedly, and he barely looked at us with the eyes of a child. October 2002, in Buenos Aires Argentina, organized by the Foundation for a New Ibero-American Journalism (FNPI), the Inter-American Bank of Development (BID) and the Proa Foundation. To this material were added interventions of the great teacher in another workshop, held at the headquarters of the FNPI in Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, with the support of the BID, in October 2000, and in a conference given on March 8, 2001 at the Iberoamerican University of Mexico.

## ***Part I THE TRADE***

### **THE JOURNALISTS AND WORKERS OF THE MEDIA**

50 years ago this job looked very different from how it is perceived today. It was a profession of high respect and dignity, which played an intellectual and political role. It was exercised by a small group of people who obtained recognition from their societies. A journalist was an important person, admired. When he walked down the street, everyone greeted him.

Some of the greatest politicians in the contemporary world began their career as journalists and always felt proud of it. British Prime Minister Winston Churchill worked as a correspondent in Africa before and became one of the great statesmen of the twentieth century; the same happened to some writers like Ernest Hemingway, for example. These great men always recognized that their careers began in journalism, and they never stopped being journalists. But that has changed in the last 20 years, after a tremendous transformation in the practices of this trade.

Contemporary print journalism represents only a small portion of the great media world. In that field, which is also in perpetual expansion, we, the print journalists, occupy little space. The number of those employed in broadcasting is increasing every day, especially in television. The denomination of media worker is applied to them, since they are mass media workers.

Unlike journalists 50 years ago, the media worker today is an anonymous person. Nobody knows him, nobody knows who he is. This is due to the most important change that happened in their work routines: the final product that a mass media worker creates is not his own but is the result of a chain of people like him who participated in the construction of the news. Each article or news

piece that is published has been worked on by 30 or 40 anonymous people; so many people participate in the process of transforming the material that an author cannot be established for what was finally seen on the television screen.

As a consequence, something as central as personal pride was lost in this profession. That pride also implied the responsibility of the journalists for his work: the man who puts his name in a text feels responsible for what he wrote. On the other hand, in television, and in large multimedia networks, just as in factories, this personal responsibility no longer exists.

## **A VIRTUAL WORLD**

At the same time, the relevance of the media grows as the century progresses. The young journalists who work today in the small territory of the written press are going to work in a civilization where our task will matter more every day for two reasons: the first, because it is a profession through which you can manipulate the public opinion; the second, because media mechanisms build a virtual world that replaces the real world.

The manipulation of the ways in which people think, a practice of great diffusion, is used in numerous senses and measures. Censorship no longer exists as such, with the exception of certain countries; instead, other mechanisms are used that define what to highlight, what to omit, what to change to manipulate in a more subtle way. That matters to the powerful of this world, always so attentive to the media, because they dominate the image they make known to society and operate on the mentality and sensitivity of the societies they govern.

With regard to the construction of the virtual world, it is valuable to remember that up to 30 or 40 years ago men and women knew the history that they were taught in schools and through the story of their families, two aspects that were part of the collective memory of the societies to which we belonged. Today, on the other hand, with the development of the media, we live in a world where history has become double, where two simultaneous stories coexist: the one we learned in school, in our families and personally, and the one the media instills in us, sometimes subconsciously through television, radio and electronic distribution methods. The big problem arises when, over time, this accumulation of media constructions makes us live less and less in real history and increasingly in fiction. It is the first time that something like this happens to humanity. We face a cultural phenomenon that we do not know what could be its consequences.

The media revolution has raised the fundamental problem of how to understand the world. Converted into a new source of history, the small screen of television elaborates and tells incompetent and erroneous versions, which are imposed without being contrasted with authentic sources or original documents. The media multiplies at a much faster rate than books with concrete and solid knowledge.

As an example we have the tragic events that took place in Rwanda in 1994. One of the biggest massacres of the twentieth century took place over three months in a small and unknown country, deep inside the huge continent of Africa, with a very complicated sociological structure, with a peculiar cultural and ethnic history that very few people knew about. There are also very few people who know what really happened there: some academics, some specialists in African affairs.

A very small group that was certainly amazed at the falsehood with which the horror that Rwanda experienced when the news spread throughout the world was announced. Millions and millions of people on all continents learned an unreal history of those events through the news that television showed. That fictitious construction was the only story we knew, the only one there was and remained, because alternative voices, the few books that appeared on Rwanda by anthropologists, sociologists and other specialists cannot offer the same accessibility as the mass media. Ordinary people know the history of the world through the mainstream media. Like that, more and more virtual stories take place in the real world in our imaginary. These manipulations take us away from the real stories and problems that occur in the various civilizations. We live in a world of so many cultures that only a small group of specialists is able to understand and learn something of what is happening. The rest accesses the fragmented and superficial discourse that the great media condenses in a minute: it is a problem that we will continue to suffer while the news moves so much money, is influenced by capital and competes as products of the owners of the media.

## **WE ARE TOGETHER WITH OTHERS**

Nothing is further from the basic sense of journalism, however. What we do is not a product, nor an expression of the reporter's individual talent. We have to understand that it is a collective work in which the people from whom we obtain the information and opinions with which we carry out our work participate. Of course, a journalist must have his own qualities, but his task will depend on the others: he who does not know how to share can hardly dedicate himself to this profession.

Journalism, in my opinion, is among the most gregarious professions that exist, because without the others we cannot do anything. Without the help, participation, opinions and thinking of others, we do not exist. The fundamental condition of this trade is the understanding with the other: we do, and we are, what others allow us. No modern society can exist without journalists, but journalists cannot exist without society.

It follows that a fundamental condition for exercising this trade is being able to function in conjunction with others. In most cases we become slaves of situations where we lose autonomy, where we depend on another taking us to a secluded place, that another decides to talk to us about what we are investigating. A journalist cannot place himself above those with whom he will work: on the contrary, he must be a peer, one more, someone like those others, to be able to approach, understand, and then express his expectation and hopes.

The best way to get information is through friendship, decidedly. A journalist cannot do anything alone, and if the other person is the only source of the material in which he will work, it is essential to know how to get in touch with that other person, get their trust and achieve some empathy with him. During my professional experience I had many friends who lacked this willingness to make friends among people, and they had to quit journalism because they couldn't do much. This characteristic is accompanied by one of the mysteries of our trade: what happens when the other has a biased view of the facts, or tries to manipulate us with his opinion. To prevent this there is no prescription, because everything depends on the situation, which is like saying a lot of things. The only action that can be taken, if we have the time, is to gather as many opinions as possible, so that we can balance and make a selection.

Finally, it is important to keep in mind that we work with the most delicate matter in this world:



people. With our words, with what we write about them, we can destroy their lives. Our profession takes us for a day, or perhaps five hours, to a place that after work we leave. Surely we will never return there, but the people who helped us will stay, and their neighbors will read what we have written about them. If what we write endangers these people, they may no longer be able to live in their place, and who knows if there will be another place where they can go.

That is why writing journalism is an extremely delicate activity. We have to measure the words we use, because each one can be interpreted cruelly by the enemies of those people. From this point of view our ethical criteria must be based on respect for the integrity and image of the other. Because, I insist, we leave and never return, but what we write about people stays with them for the rest of their lives. Our words can destroy them. And in general these are people who lack the resources to defend themselves, who cannot do anything.

## **THE TRAINING OF THE FURTIVE POACHER**

Along with that sensitivity it is valuable to maintain a humble attitude about what we do because in this profession the experiences do not accumulate. Unlike other activities, where sometimes it is possible to affirm that someone has achieved a lot, in journalism we never really know what to do, how to act, how to write. In each article, each report, each chronicle, we will always be starting over, from scratch. Even the books we write do not escape this rule: none will serve us much for the one who follows. We will always be at the beginning, we can never be satisfied.

In this profession the learning never ends. In medicine, in engineering or in administration it can be said that, at some point, careers end. In journalism this is not the case because this job deals with new data, new facts, and new problems. As the world progresses and moves, we are within those changes because society expects us to reach it so that we can tell what is happening, so that we interpret what the novelty means. That imposes on us the obligation to study everything, and permanently. The journalist is a poacher in all branches of knowledge

Anthropology, sociology, political science, psychology, literature...We must study any discipline we can, because our profession is transparent: everyone sees how we write, that is, how we study, how we investigate, how we reflect. And the reader votes every day on our professional fate. Not every four or six years, as happens to presidents, but every day.

The reader is an active person, with his opinions and preferences, who buys the newspaper and wastes his time reading us because he trusts that there he will find answers to his questions. If he does not find them, he will stop reading the newspaper or the journalist; but if he finds them he will be very grateful and eventually he will begin to recognize our names. That way we build our position in this trade.

## **THE CONTEXT OF OUR WORDS**

But journalists not only depend on others to write and to read us: also the journalistic text depends, like no other, on its context. A journalistic written work is its full value in a certain place and at a certain time; in others it loses many of its values automatically. First there is the context of the magazine or newspaper for which it was written. Each medium has its principles and

philosophies; It also has formal characteristics that allow this journalistic text to be better understood in the light of an editorial or other texts that explain background, complementary information or interpretations that were left out, since it is not possible to say everything in an article.

The second time counts: the articles written three, four, or five months ago do not have the same value as yesterday. That is irremediable. That is why several writers and journalists try to save their writings. Publishing books gives support so that these texts avoid the possibility of extinction for the text. Readers also constitute the context of a journalistic text. When we write we ask who we direct an article. If the reader of a text about President Hugo Chavez is a Venezuelan, it would be stupid to fill it with details that he surely knows. For those of us who live in other countries, on the contrary, these details are indispensable if we want to discuss the article.

Finally, an article is part of the set of texts produced by its author. We cannot say much about a journalist for a single text. You have to relativize criticism, because a text is a limited, small sample of a journalist.

## ***Part II THE MEDIA***

### **FROM THE TRUE TO THE INTERESTING**

Our trade began to change as a result of the technological revolution that allowed the transmission of news easily and immediately. The electronic channels made it possible for the news to travel quickly and without issue from one place to another across the world, in a radical transformation: decades ago, getting the news to reach its final destination in journalism was itself a story. Egon Erwin Kisch, a Czech-German correspondent in the early twentieth century, a classic of our profession in the world, wrote in his memoirs\* that the work of sending the news was sometimes more fascinating than the report itself. With the technological revolution this issue ceased to exist.

But there is a second reason for the change of our trade, perhaps the most important: that the news became a good business. This change is very important, since the discovery of the enormous economic value of the news is due to the arrival of great capital to the media. Journalism was usually done by ambition or ideals, but suddenly it was noticed that the news was business, which promised money quickly and plentifully. That totally changed our work environment.

When the great capital arrived at our profession, it formed networks of mass communication that divided the field of news into two unequal sectors: large multimedia and small marginalized media. The direction of these great multimedia was in the hands of people who did not come from journalism or were interested in this profession, but saw it as a mere tool, an instrument to obtain high and fast profits. That is why reporters lack a common language with the heads of media, business administrators who do not even master the vocabulary of the trade.

That created a gap between the owners and media managers and we, the journalists, because they pursue different interests and goals. Today, the chronicler who comes to cover the boss does not

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\* "Sensation Fair" (originally published in German as "Marktplatz der Sansationen")

ask if the news he brings is true, but if it is interesting and if he can sell it. This is the deepest change in the media world: the replacement of one ethic with another. Our profession was always based on the search for truth: the value of the news or the text was to give an account of the truth. Many times the information worked as a weapon in the political struggle, for influence and for power. But today, after the entry of large capital into the mass media, that value was replaced by the search for what is interesting or what can be sold. As true as information is, it will be worthless if it is not in a position to interest an audience that, on the other hand, is increasingly capricious.

Thus the value of the word has been trivialized. The current problem of communication is not that the truth is lost, but that the word no longer has the weight of before. In the communist era the Soviet press had four pages, and if any critical article appeared in them, someone went to a concentration camp. Each word had the value of life or death. Now you can write about anything and, in a context of overabundance and entertainment, nobody cares. In Poland the press writes that a minister is a liar and nothing happens, the minister continues to do what he wants, firm in his post.

## **A JOB ANYONE CAN DO**

Now that information is a commodity under the laws of the market, that is, destined to obtain maximum profitability and point to monopoly, the old heroes of journalism have been replaced, to a large extent, by a large number of those anonymous workers of the Media that we already mentioned. Today the soldier of our trade does not investigate in search of the truth, but in order to find sensational events that may appear on the front pages of his media.

I remember the first conference of African heads of state, held in 1963. Journalists from around the world arrived to cover it: we gathered about 200 special envoys and correspondents from the big newspapers, news agencies and radio stations. There were also several film chroniclers, but I don't remember television equipment. There were authentic pen masters, experts in the problems of certain countries. Today I have the impression that this great gathering of world reporters was the closing of an era in which journalism was lived as a noble vocation to which people give themselves fully and for a lifetime.

Today thousands and thousands of people collect and circulate information, and journalism schools that year after year launch new executors of these tasks have also multiplied. However, journalism has ceased to be a mission and many of the people who work in the media consider it an occupation like any other, who may well leave to enter an advertising agency or be a stockbroker.

## **THE OFFICES OF POWER**

With the businessmen in the place of the romantic seekers of the truth who used to direct the media, some changes became visible in the eyes of those who knew beforehand the newsrooms or the radio and television studios.

In the past the media were set up in second class buildings and had narrow and poorly

conditioned spaces where journalists were busy, almost always poorly dressed and without money in their pockets. Today a television studio belonging to the big chains occupies sumptuous palaces full of marble and mirrors, through whose silent halls the visitor is led by dazzling assistants. In these areas the power concentrated before only the heads of the government was concentrated.

Currently the power is in the hands of anyone who owns a television studio, a newspaper, a radio station. In the contemporary world, having media means having power. That is why those who rebelled against undemocratic regimes in Europe and Asia did not try to take presidential or parliamentary seats, but instead went straight to conquer television channels.

This enormous and growing influence of the media, in particular electronic media, has been noticed better than in another area in the political world, which is struggling to have more presence in the general public through the media. Elections in the United States are a good example of how the mass media influence not only the presentation but also the management of political life. There you can clearly see how politicians adjust to the demands of the media, and how that influence is a double-edged sword: sometimes it gives them good results, and sometimes bad ones. It is a complicated tool.

## **HUMANITY AND MEDIA**

Without ignoring that aspect, I want to point out that in discussions about the power of the media, too much attention is given to issues such as market laws or the audience, and too little to human aspects. I am not a media theorist but a journalist and writer who has been preparing and consuming information for 40 years, and from that experience I notice a problem of proportions. I believe that the fairly widespread claim that all humanity lives pending in the media is excessive. Even when there are events, such as the inauguration of the Olympic Games, which reach 2 billion people, it must be admitted that this figure constitutes a third of the planet's population.

Other television broadcasts about major events can be seen by 10 or 20 percent of the Earth's inhabitants: huge masses of people, of course, but by the way not all of humanity. There are hundreds of millions of beings who live totally isolated from the media or who come into contact with them once in a blue moon.

I had to live in many places in Africa where there is no television, radio or newspapers. There are also large areas of Asia in which televisions operate only two to four hours a day. In Mongolia, although there are stations, the televisions that people have are so bad that they cannot receive the signals of the programs. And I remember when Leonid Brezhnev ruled the USSR, the programs broadcast by Western stations did not interfere in Siberia: nobody listened to them for lack of receivers.

Much of humanity lives isolated from the media and does not have to worry about the manipulation of public opinion or the effect that saturated sequences of violence can have on the education of their children. In addition, in many parts of the world television has only an amusing function, so that televisions are first and foremost in bars and restaurants. People usually go for a drink and look sideways at the device, and it doesn't even occur to anyone to expect programs be serious or educate, nor do we expect such a thing from a circus performance.

## **THE GREAT HERD**

The mistaken identity between the media and the world led to a greater misunderstanding: as their business grew larger and more important, the media began to lock themselves into a life of their own and disconnected from reality. If before the press was intended to reflect the world, now the mainstream media are limited to reflecting their world competing with each other. They are no longer interested in what happens outside, but that the other media do not anticipate them, that they do not publishing something that they do not have. A large herd of media workers move, like a group, from one place to another in the world, creating a brutal centralization of the news. To compete with each other, the media are always in the band, and as a result of which each one looks at the other and none looks at the world. Hence, if several events occur at once in the world, the media only covers one: the one that attracts the pack.

More than once I was a member of that pack, as I described in my book "The Soccer War" and I saw how it works. I remember the crisis generated by the taking of American hostages of Tehran: although nothing happened in the capital of Iran, thousands of media envoys from around the world remained there for months. That same pack moved years later to the Persian Gulf during the war, although the Americans did not let anyone approach the front; at the same time terrible things were happening in Mozambique and Sudan, but nobody cared because the pack was in Kuwait and Iraq. Something similar happened in Russia during the coup in 1991: the world ignored the truly important events, strikes and demonstrations in St. Petersburg, because media envoys expected something to happen in Moscow, and did not move even though the calm was almost absolute.

## **DISTANT MANAGED PEONS**

The development of communication techniques, especially mobile phones and email, radically changed relations between media workers and their bosses. Before the correspondent of a newspaper, a press agency or a station had great freedom and could develop his personal initiative: he sought the information, selected and prepared. Nowadays, and in increasing proportion, those envoys have become simple pawns, whose bosses move across the world from a power station that may be at the other end of the planet.

These bosses, on the other hand, have information mediated by many sources, and an image of events can be formed very different from that of the reporter in the place. In the vertigo of the competition for the news, the boss cannot wait patiently for the reporter to finish his work: that is why he informs him at a distance about the development of the events that the envoy is seeing and the only thing he expects to receive from him is the conformation of the image they have built in the central office. In short, the topic covered is replaced by the messenger's problems. Unfortunately, as the Canadian Marshall McLuhan said, the medium is the message.

When I was in Rwanda, during the 1994 massacre, I noticed that many journalists, who were so connected to their headquarters by telephone and email, did not see what was happening there. They called their bosses in New York, London, or Madrid, who told them they needed to confirm this or other news that had come to them. They were no longer reporters: they only followed

orders from some bosses who didn't even know where Rwanda was. But in my experiences the best reports are written when the central office doesn't even know where it is. I always tried to run away from those people who didn't know the reality of where I was.

Additionally, when the media close on themselves and replace the problem of substance with that of form, they replace philosophy with technique. Discussions are reduced to how to edit, how to tell and how to print; we discuss editing techniques, databases, and hard disk capacity. There is no talk, however, of the core of what they want to edit and print. Years ago, living in Mexico, I became friends with the correspondent of an American television network. Once I found him filming some clashes between students and police on the street, and asked him what was happening. "I have no idea," he replied while still filming. "I'm just shooting. I just capture the images, send them to the central office and there they do what they think with the material."

## **MATTER OF TIME**

That is a pressing problem in our profession: journalists are given very little time to gather the information with which they will write the news or the chronicle. If you want to do things well, with the depth that the exercise of this profession requires, you need to have time. You cannot send a journalist to a place for a day and expect him to achieve a real vision of things. That is the permanent struggle between the editors and the reporters: some consider that a day of research is enough to produce an article; the others know that this is not possible.

As in any creative task such as painting a picture, filming a movie, composing a musical work, writing a book takes time. The availability of time allows us to talk with more people, read more documents, observe more, think more: work seriously. On the other hand, solving things in a short time leads to superficiality and falsehood, unfortunately abundant in our profession. Sometimes readers ask themselves: "What does this guy say? How could he write something so far from reality?" And there is no way to clarify that the responsibility does not lie with the reporter, but the conditions under which he had to do his job are to blame for those results.

The journalist is under pressure from bosses who tell him that if he has no front page material, they take it out. I am against that kind of sensationalist press, because it overlooks that a journalist is a citizen who, like any other, must ensure the common good. We should not only move professional responsibility, but also the citizen who makes us wonder if what we do is good for our community, for our nation.

Worse, the practice of journalism is so feudal that you have to wait years and years to get a certain professional position and be able to afford to say "Don't count on me to do such a job in one day." This can only be allowed by a journalist who already has a name for himself. The journalist who is starting, however, cannot choose where to go or what he wants to write about.

## **SIMPLIFICATIONS**

As a result of these work routines, the ignorance of media envoys about the events they have to describe and comment on is sometimes shocking. During the strike that took place in 1981 in Gdansk, Poland, from which the Solidarity union was born, half of the journalists who came from

all over the world to cover the event did not even know where exactly they were. Even less did those who covered the 1994 tragedy know about Rwanda: many were in Africa for the first time and those who had arrived aboard United Nations planes abounded, with no idea where they were or the causes of the conflict. But it is not the fault of the reporters, as a camera from a team of envoys showed me that a great American television network moves around the world. "What can you demand of me," he told me "if I have filmed in five countries on three continents?"

The truth is that the tremendous centralization of the news greatly reduced our knowledge of this complicated world in which we live. Despite its enormous diversity, the enormous amount of problems and dramas it contains, our spectrum is reduced to whether there will be war against Iraq or there will be no war against Iraq. Our way of understanding the world was so impoverished that not only do we know only one or two things, but we know the worst of all.

A while ago, invited by New York University, I traveled to the United States to participate in a conference on globalization. The Americans present were wondering if there was going to be war against Iraq, discussing the possibilities of the conflict. But none knew where Iraq is, who are its neighbors, how many people live there, what is the ethnic composition, what are its problems, what is the capital. Nobody. They knew the name: Iraq. When asked about something in the country they mentioned Islam, which they referred to as a united religion.

If these people were asked what was the hardest and most terrible war of the second part of the twentieth century, they would give different answers. They ignore that the most cruel, bloody, and practically the last war between states, occurred between Iraq and Iran in the 1980s. In the confrontation between two Islamic countries, nearly two million people died. Americans are unaware that the toughest conflicts occur within Islam itself, and not from outside. That the force of fundamentalism or religious fanaticism is directed against their own governments and not against the world of whites. That these fundamentalists consider their governments great enemies of Islam, traitors of their faith.

Those and other complications of the contemporary world are not known. Television does not teach them, but, on the contrary, simplifies them, reduces them to a few words. The manipulation of news in the media prevents the development of stories like that and makes us all prisoners of a reduced, poor and limited language. With that language we cannot understand, write or reflect much, because it hides the most important thing in the contemporary world, which is its growing complexity.

We live in a world in which more and more elements participate every day, a world that is constantly growing. Each year we add 80 million new human beings, 55 of them born in the so-called Third World. At the same time we produce more everything: more cars, more television sets, more water bottles, more shoes. And just as we have more millionaires, we also have poorer ones. The most outstanding feature of contemporary societies is the biggest problem of the 21st century, the tragic paradox of our civilization: growth sharpens social inequalities.

We do not know how to break that link, what to do to make development more fair and give rise to a more humane society. It happens that inequality is not a novel fact. We find it at all levels of social organization: it exists in the family, where the situation of men is usually better than that of women and children; it exists within each country, where there are rich regions and poor regions, both in developed and underdeveloped nations; it exists in the continents, where rich and poor

countries live together; it exists on the planet, where inequality is visible in the hemispheres.

## **SEEING IS NOT KNOWING**

In the 1930s the great theorist of art psychology, the German Rudolf Arnheim pointed out in his book "Cinema as Art", prophetically, that people confuse the world generated by sensations with the world created by thought, and he believes that seeing is the same as understanding. However, it is not so. And even more: the increasing amount of images that constantly attack us, on the contrary, limits the relationship with the spoken and written word and, consequently, the domain of thought. Arnheim also wrote, some time later, that television would be a test for our wisdom: it could enrich us, he believed, but at the same time it could let us down. He was right. Very often we find people who confuse seeing with understanding. We hear, for example, a couple who discusses: "No, dear, you are not right. What you say is false." And the other responds: "How am I not right? I have seen it on television!" This identification, usually unconscious, between seeing an act of mastery of sensations and knowing or understanding acts of mastery of thought is a basic element in the manipulation of people, which television knows how to take advantage of. In the dictatorship censorship works; in democracy manipulation more acceptable. And the target of these aggressions is always the same: the man in the street.

Let us analyze the problem of poverty, surely the greatest of those who suffer on our planet, after the Cold War, and see how the large television networks treat it. The first manipulation carried out is to present poverty as one of its symptoms: the drama of hunger. We know that two thirds of humanity lives in the misery caused by an unjust division of the world between rich and poor; on the other hand, hunger appears only from time to time and in isolated territories, because it is usually a fact of local dimension that, moreover, frequently counts among its sources associated with natural cataclysms such as droughts or floods, or caused by man, such as confrontations and wars.

To combat hunger, surpluses of food available to rich countries are sent to the deprived territories, massively and through large-scale international operations. Television shows these hunger settlement operations, such as those carried out in the 1990s in Sudan and Somalia, in their spectacular coverage of the hunger drama, but without even saying a word about the need to end global misery.

The second trick that is applied in the manipulation of the issue of misery is to present it in certain contexts, such as ethnographic or tourist programs that show exotic corners for cultures that are considered central to the world. Thus, misery is defined with exoticism: it has the value of a curious fact, a characteristic of certain places, almost a tourist attraction. These images of misery abound particularly in travel-specialized television channels, such as the Discovery Channel.

## **THE DIM REFLECTION**

At the same time that the development of communications has connected all parts of the planet with each other, international news occupies less space in the media. They are displaced by local information, sensational notes, gossip, and practical information. That is to say that when technology makes possible the construction of a global village, the media reflect the world in a



superficial and fragmentary way, focusing only on the visits of presidents and terrorist attacks. We have to live in paradoxical times.

But perhaps for that reason it is necessary to be objective and fair, and then to put into perspective this revolution of the media that, in addition, is in full development. It is a new phenomenon, too new for human civilization to have been able to generate antibodies that fight its pathologies such as manipulation, corruption and arrogance.

The literature that studies communication is very critical; sooner or later it will influence, at least partially, the development of the media. On the other hand, we have to recognize that many people sit in front of the television because they expect to see exactly what is offered to them: people satisfied with themselves as described by the great Spanish philosopher Jose Ortega y Gasset, in his book "The Revolt of the Masses" and in particular of your tastes and preferences.

At this point, I think, we should be liberal. I am not an entertainment enthusiast who replaces information, but I recognize that it also has the right to exist because many people search the media for a moment of fun and not serious knowledge. Sometimes journalists demand from television things that ordinary people ask: we expect television to teach us, to show us the world. But other people use television to go to a bar near their house and drink beer with friends while watching the football game.

A large part of humanity does not have intellectual ambitions, but aspires to spend its life more or less in a good way. These people want to have fun, and this cannot be denied. On the other hand, we must not omit that, together with the bad ones, very good television stations coexist, which we do not seek for a certain laziness on our part. Because it is also true that sometimes we accuse the media to justify the lethargy in which our own conscious, our lack of sensitivity and imagination, our passivity are mired.

But above all it is important to rescue that, as the world of media is very complex and diverse, a network with many levels, together with garbage and falsehood, great television programs, excellent radio stations and splendid daily newspapers coexist. The media also have positive aspects, because deserving, sensitive and talented people work in their writing and studies; people convinced that others are very valuable and the planet we live in is an exciting place that deserves to be known, understood and saved. These people usually do their work with self-denial and dedication, with enthusiasm and the spirit of sacrifice, giving up comfort, well being and even personal safety. Its only objective is to testify to what surrounds us and show the amount of dangers and hopes that our experience contains.

## **GOOD MEDIA IS NOT DEAD**

Happily in the diversity and paradox of our planet and our time there is room for very good newspapers, radio station and television programs. The journalist aware of his work faces dramatically greater competition than before, it is true; But I believe - and I strongly defend this view that an ambitious and hardworking man, capable of treating others as his friends and not as his enemies, can develop and know success.

In every important country we find newspapers of the highest professional level: *Le Monde* in France, *La Repubblica* in Italy, *El Pais* in Spain, the Independent in the United Kingdom, or the Frankfurter *Allemeine Zeitung* in Germany, to list just a handful. Not a single newspaper of good quality has closed so far, despite the panorama offered by the mass media. That has a simple explanation: its readers are faithful, and even grow in number. That is to say that in contemporary societies there is a group of people who are interested in this world, who want to know and understand something of their stories, and that is enough to maintain optimism. The same applies to radio stations and television programs of high professional quality. There are excellent means of communication waiting for us to overcome our laziness, the automatic movement of turning on the TV and seeing what is offered to us, and that we put into practice the intelligent will look for them. The media require an active attitude from us, an attitude of interest that allows us to co-produce that communication.

### ***Part III The New Journalism***

#### **THE CREATIVE MIX**

The New Journalism, which gives its name to the foundation where we are guests in this workshop, was born in the 1960s. Norman Mailer, Truman Capote and Tom Wolfe, among other American writers, created this new genre, which became known with the name of New Journalism\*, because after years of work as war correspondents in the Pacific†, several of them concluded that journalistic language as conceived by newspapers was not able to reflect reality in all its nuances.

In the first place because that language, which generally continues to handle traditional daily journalism, is very poor: it employs only an average of a thousand words. With that vocabulary, certainly, you cannot realize the world in its wealth. Another reason that prompted this renewal is that the phrases of traditional journalism are limited to very conservative constructions: "This afternoon the President of the Republic arrived at the airport, where he was received by members of his cabinet," things like that, that can be written automatically, almost like sleepwalking. That language dominates the daily press because it has the courage to be effective and fast, but it is a restricted set of phrases that are basically too superficial and limited, and does not allow us to move or move forward.

With these conventions accepted in journalism it was rare to find an article about a president that began with an observation about the stars, or an old story about mountain rivers. But these journalists, driven by the need to promote change, and even a revolution, did. Its objective was to introduce another language and other means of expression. The source they turned to in search of resources to do so was fiction. The journalism that they wanted to do did not fit in the formula of the news, but they wanted to try to deepen our knowledge of the world, to make it "rich and full."

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\* The term comes from the 1973 anthology "The New Journalism," edited by Tom Wolfe and published by Harper & Row. Wolfe wrote an essay for the *Bulletin of the American Society of Newspaper Editors* in 1970 of the same name where he wrote that the article "Joe Louis – the King As A Middle Aged Man" (Esquire, June 1962) by Gay Talese, is the first article to fit this style.

† Of the names mentioned Mailer served in the US Army in the Philippines and later Japan. Capote and Wolfe did not serve in World War II.

Like the cubist painters, they understood that a form takes many forms in itself and tried to show it from several viewpoints simultaneously.

This is how New Journalism was born from the combination of two different areas until that moment: one, the events and the real people that nourished traditional journalism; the other, the tools and techniques of fiction ruled the description of these events and people. The works that resulted from that mixture constituted this new classification that we know as New Journalism.

## **A GENRE WITH GREAT PRECURSORS**

This creative fusion has important antecedents. The literature of the nineteenth century, that of the classic novel, abounds in these forms. Fiction writers and poets of that time, for example, when they realized that their main genres did not allow them to reflect what they wanted to say, they wrote essays. Poets like W. H. Auden, T. S. Eliot or William Wordsworth wrote essays. And not only poetry presented the contradiction of being a very rich and at the same time very limited genre: also the great fiction writers were at the same time reporters; in fact, it is difficult to find any that, together with his fiction works, also made journalism.

Honore de Balzac, a reporter who traveled, talked with people and looked for documents in his work "The Chouans" gives us a perfect book of reports. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, the great poet, wrote "Italian Travels," a collection of travel reports. "Stories of a Hunter" by Ivan Turgenev, is an exemplary text for those who make New Journalism; the same can be said of the memoirs by Fyodor Dostoevsky, "House of the Dead."

We can also mention some names of the twentieth century, but only a few because the list could become endless. George Orwell wrote several classic reports: "Tribute to Catalonia" is a good one. Another great noteworthy is the Italian Curzio Malaparte: nobody can call himself a journalist if he has not read his book "Kaputt." Another author of New Journalism was the Brit Bruce Chatwin, author of "In Patagonia." Near him I could quote the Frenchman Jean Baudrillard and his book "America." And, more recently, I would include the name of our friend Gabriel Garcia Marquez, in particular his "News of a Kidnapping."

## **FROM THE DESCRIPTION TO THE ESSAY**

After the incorporation of this mixture of people and real events with the resources of the narrative, another important change transformed the content of our work. It happened when the television genres stole the portrayal of images.

Before, in order to help the reader imagine, the reconstruction of the visual universe occupied an important place in the literature. But television arrived and became the great thief of our literary images. We could no longer abound in descriptions: readers could see what we were talking about on their TV screen. Although television languages are limited, we cannot compete with them at that point.

The void that generated this subtraction of resources was filled by including elements of the essay genre in texts. Everything on television takes about fifteen seconds: I see, for example, that a tank

is moving forward. But I don't know where it is going, or why it is moving, or what it means. Television informs with quick and short images out of context, and with this in thinking beings arouses interest in knowing what they are seeing. That curiosity creates a bridge between television and the print press, when the intelligent man buys the newspaper the next day to find explanations of what was happening the previous afternoon on his television screen.

In the newspaper, man can stop to reread, return to the text as many times as he wants to reflect and seek explanations. He bought the newspaper precisely for that reason. It is true that I am not speaking of any reader, but of the one who thinks. But for that man the New Journalism presents new values and importance, because it is a genre capable of forming and also explaining, commenting, provoking its reflection. That is to say that at this moment the value of our texts work in connection with journalism in other media: a new dimension has been created in the media world, very positive, where the different branches nourish each other.

For those of us who do this New Journalism, the statistical functions of thought and opinion load us with new obligations. Because to say something new to those thinking men and women who buy the newspaper with expectations of finding explanations and stimuli for reflection, journalists must be a hundred times wiser than they. That imposes the task of studying continuously.

## **A HUNDRED READ PAGES FOR EACH WRITTEN PAGE**

Everything I write is preceded by huge readings. I read a lot because I am convinced of the importance of deepening everything that can be done in the subject on which I must elaborate a text. We live in a world of enormous intellectual production, where lots of books have been written on all subjects. Writing without knowing them, or without even knowing about their existence, reveals a very naive attitude. There are always experts in those matters about which we have to write, and the value of their work is incalculable for ours.

If we are going to talk about social phenomena, for example, we must build the approach in a broad way: the philosophy, anthropology, psychology of that phenomenon. We cannot enter the social and political field without first reading a lot; That is indispensable not only to fall into discoveries made by others, but because prior reading gives strength to our prose. If an author feels insecure about the object of his work, his writing immediately reveals that lack of trust. The strength of prose comes from our security.

Personally I think there is a correlation between previous reading and good writing: to produce a page we should have read a hundred. Not one less. Before writing any of my books, I read about two hundred on each of its subjects. In some sense, writing is the smallest part of our work.

## **ERASE THE LIMITS**

New Journalism was developed at the time we call postmodern, and one of its characteristics has been to gradually erase boundaries between genres. Its context of appearance and development was the growing appearance of books whose genres are difficult to specify, since they mix several together.

The classic of this new phenomenon is "Tristes Tropiques" written by the French anthropologist Claude Levi Strauss. This book actually contains five different books, combined in such a way that only after reading it we notice its complexity and wonder what kind of work it is. In its pages, anthropological studies on several indigenous tribes of Brazil coexist with reports on the adventures of the trip, with an essay on civilizations, and a personal diary. Another anthropologist, the American Clifford Geertz, a specialist in modern cultural problems, published an essay named "Blurred Genres, the Refrigeration of Social Thought.\*"

Like these texts, many others decreed the end of boundaries between genres. Not only in our profession: this cultural phenomenon of blurring of expressive limits also appeared in the plastic arts, music, and other branches of man's spiritual and intellectual activity. Its background dates back to the early twentieth century, when with the appearance of cinema, for example, it was feared that this new discipline, born of a new technique, would end other means of expression such as painting. However, it did not turn out that way. Nor did that happen when radio came up and once again it was said that this novelty would end all of the above; nor when the massive expansion of television in the 1960s aroused similar and equally erroneous prophecies.

Now the same is said of the internet, which in my opinion will not end with our established media. I think that the modes of human expression become more and more diverse, but that is not why they are ended. To the contrary, I think they support each other. Television did not end literature, but through a new mode of promotion allowed it to build a better market.

Currently, literature moves in two opposite directions. One of these branches could deserve the name of television literature, since it is made up of novels for large markets, with strong plots full of conflict, emotion, and violence, which constitute 90 percent of the book market. The other branch, smaller and more important, is the literature of creation, reelection and essay, an ambitious literature whose classic example is Thomas Mann's novel "The Magic Mountain." Its history is very weak, nothing happens in its pages: it tells the life of some people locked in a building, who do not move. But, chapter by chapter, Mann is building an essay on time, human behavior, life in the contemporary world. The story is used only as a skeleton on which to mount this essay structure.

In this scenario are New Journalism and fiction, although our daily professional practice places us far from such ambitions, since we must deal with stories given by real and immediate events. But even with these characteristics we are facing a new phenomenon, literary and journalistic, which we have to be aware of to try to find our place. Not because we threaten some of the journalistic genres that come together in this new way of writing about facts and real men using the tools of literature; Like cinema, radio or television, New Journalism simply adds up as another form of expression. But we must be aware not to stop being precisely a branch of journalism. In Latin America, the idea of Gabriel Garcia Marquez is to support the development of journalism without turning it into a literary genre. So far, we are in a stage of experimentation and testing. We have to wait quietly for the development of the genre.

## **THE DOUBLE WORKLOAD**

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\* Originally published in *The American Scholar*, Spring, 1980 pp. 165-179.

For many years I worked as a correspondent for a press agency, the hardest and most difficult job that a journalist can do, because they work 24 hours a day. That intense dedication confronted me with the lack of time and channels for my personal ambitions as an author. I had to cover what they told me, without being able to escape: in journalism, as in any other profession, we have to do the things they send us.

To solve this problem, that is, to be able to write and also fulfill my obligations as a correspondent without feeling frustrated, I consciously created a schizophrenic situation: I worked in two workshops simultaneously. Make the decision to do a personal work of excellence.

Writing for a news agency is hard work, of great tension and nervousness, punctuated by deliveries to the boss, who ask for short news because of costs, time and competition. A normal article has no more than eight hundred words. What torture. But you can tolerate it if you choose for yourself an independent niche, a space to write what excites one's will and ambition. In this workshop, things are said in another language, they are focused under another look, they are composed according to other criteria.

So I generated two separate areas: in one I wrote the pages that allowed me to earn my bread, a job that can sometimes be uncreative, very mechanical; in the other, I dedicated myself to what I deserved from my point of view. In Africa, in Asia, in Latin America, with that rich, colorful reality, I thought it was worth telling that life so different from the European one, as that did not fit in the press agency's cables, while my colleagues went to the bar to drink whisky I locked myself in making notes that would later become books.

We have to gather and save the materials that matter to us. Everything must be documented: information, testimonials, and ideas. A basic problem of our work is that it disappears the next day and we soon forget it. In this trade, as the years pass we are left empty-handed. On the other hand, if we keep documents, in the future we will be able to review this material so preserved and make the decision to do a personal work of excellence.

I want to underline this idea: in our profession, success is based on maintaining two studies. That is to say, in having a double life, living in a state of schizophrenia: being an agency correspondent or a newspaper editor who fulfills orders, and keeping, in some small place in his heart and mind, something for himself, for one's own identity, for personal ambitions.

That does not mean dedicating ourselves to more to one study than another: there are not two judgments, but two ambitions. To everything we do in our profession we must dedicate the best of us, develop it in the best possible way. Each text, for the newspaper or for the book, has to offer the result of our maximum effort and our maximum ability. There are no divisions in terms of criteria: a journalist with talent and ambition does not write bad articles. The difference is in technique: to inform an agency officer about the activity of a minister, it is not necessary to put our imagination or our knowledge of philosophy into play, but to do New Journalism, it absolutely does.

## **WAYS TO WRITE**

I do not have fixed recipes or pre-established work techniques because there are none in creative

fields, and there is written journalism. This work, in its most ambitious manifestations, requires a creative individual attitude, of one's own ways of telling and doing things. That is the richness of our trade: everyone has to develop their own ways of finding the themes and ways of expressing them.

In general, the path to an article is mysterious. The structure comes, it happens: one is thinking about how to do it and, suddenly, glimpses an idea. Each case is particular. I never know how I am going to write a book; rather, I look for the first word, and when I have it I write the first sentence, and when I have it I write the second, and then the third, and so on. I do not have a previous structure to follow to build the text in a certain way. Before I sit down I don't have the slightest idea about how I am going to write. That's why I sometimes miss what I write. And the next day or even in the moment I forget what I have written. I see my texts as if a stranger wrote them. Sometimes interviewers will ask me "In your book you wrote this," and I say, "I wrote that?"

I never read the things I write, and on one occasion I didn't write them either. I mean cynics do not work for this trade. The content that I made in Italy, invited by a magazine, to give some lectures. An editor of that publication, Maria Nadotti, put together what I said and published a book\*. I read it after it was published - I didn't even know she was going to make a book; nobody ever asked me. As I gave the lectures in English, then translated them into Italian, the book does not exist in Polish. The same goes for another interview book, which I did with a Hungarian writer, which was never published in my language. That exists in literature; if it were all the same, literature would not exist.

Nor can we ever know, according to a general method, what is the best way to convey our knowledge of a person, place or a fact. The creation of an environment, the selection of a particular story, a rational description full of data? Again, it's about something very subjective. Nor is there a general rule here: everyone has their own way of understanding, reflecting and writing. In my experience, when I write I do not think if the text is going to be a novel, a report or an essay without mentioning that, on the other hand, today everyone is mixed, but I repeatedly reflect on what I observed, in search of the way more appropriate to describe it.

I also start with a warning: everything we write is always just an approximation. The ideal that can never be achieved, cannot even be defined. We will never feel that what we wrote was exactly what we wanted to say. There will always be a margin of disappointment. In a sense, every book is a defeat: although readers consider it a magnificent work, for a writer a book brings defeat, because he understands very well that what his pages say is not exactly everything he intended to express.

Additionally, you never know why a book is well received by readers and why another, which we also consider well-written, happens without anyone wanting to read it. We move in an insecure and mysterious environment. But in the struggle to approach that abstract ideal, impossible to define, which is literary work, in the New Journalism strategies are not consciously chosen, but a certain intuition is followed. Of course, we always suffer the danger of failure, something that terrifies the writer because a poorly written book is a tragedy that cannot be turned back.

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\* "A Cynic Would Not Suit This Profession: Conversations about Good Journalism." As Kapuscinski is about to point out, he delivered the lectures in English, but they were translated into Italian. The book itself does not have an English translation.

## DIFFERENT CLASSES OF BOOKS

The first of my books consists of writings that I sent as an agency correspondent; That first volume exists only in the agency file. But every time I return from my travels I had the impression that what I had written was very superficial, very poor, very limited. To reflect all that I felt, lived and experienced, I had to look for other means of expression, and that is how I began to elaborate my reports. The deep dissatisfaction with what I had done in the urgency of the correspondent's work sent me to find a better method to narrate, a way to overcome the expressiveness of the news agency's language.

I published twenty-one titles so far, all hand written. There are not many pages because I write synthetically; that makes my books short. Some are even philosophical and psychological notes, *Lapidarium\**, of which I have published five volumes in Poland and I am working on the sixth. At the beginning, as I noted, I published collections of articles made previously for media. At one point, journalists observe that we have already accumulated a good amount of notes, and we make a selection of the best ones to edit into a more durable medium such as a book. But there is also another type of book for those of us who work in this profession, and it is the one that is written in an original way, thinking about its concept, its structure, its construction. The first book I made this way was my eighth.

In the collection volumes I tried to find a method that avoided mechanical selection. That was the origin of "The Soccer War." A Polish publishing house proposed to publish a collection of my war reports, and when I chose the texts I was dissatisfied with the method of compilation: to deliver only ten reports seemed like a small thing; I felt that I had to find a way to convert that almost thoughtless operation into a structure. Thinking, I came up with the possibility of mixing, among the reports writing that I couldn't do before. Then I found a second level for the book. Then I had the idea of including other unwritten work and made the third layer, that is how "The Soccer War" was built layer by layer, with several written and previously unwritten words.

## THE ROADS OF INTUITION

The original books pose, much more than the collected volumes, a series of problems for which there are no definite answers. On the contrary, they feed a constant discussion because they occupy an important place in something as indefinable as the author's particular taste. That is what he decides: the flavor that is given to his writing. Instinct tells him to write: "That can be done." Intuition tells him "No, no. This is not the case." The author often follows his paths unconsciously, for pure pleasure. Those subtle choices are what decide on this type of literature.

There are no rules for this kind of work and only readers then decide if the author made a mistake in the path he took. That, in turn, determines the permanence of the book. If readers judge that the author made a mistake, the book disappears immediately.

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\* Literally "fragments." Kapuscinski published six volumes titled as such between 1990 and his death in 2007. None of them are available in English.



Sometimes the decisions taken by the author take him where he did not expect. In the case of "The Emperor," for example, I did not write the life of Haile Selassie. He does not appear in the book. What appears is the way in which power changes men: how the behaviors of the man who enters politics are altered. Following my instinct, instead of writing a book about Haile Selassie, I dealt with the psychological mechanisms behind power, the functioning of institutions and the men who run them. And that is precisely why the book has been translated into twenty languages and is constantly published in the United States: executives of large American corporations find aspects of their organizations in this book, and find guidance on what happens to their organization.

"The Emperor" was adapted as a play and when I went to the premiere in London I met the theater director in tears. I asked her what was wrong with her. I knew she was crying. I said again "But why?" And she replied "Ryszard, the questions of power. They appear in your Emperor. Why do you ask me then?": The book, in short, found its readers through the path that I followed by intuition: talk about the mechanisms of power, not about events or about characters.

## **HISTORY OF "THE EMPEROR"**

Almost thirty years ago, in 1975, I wrote "The Emperor": shortly after the Ethiopian revolution, when I covered these events daily as a press correspondent. I met the emperor because I met Ethiopia, traveling constantly from the neighboring country where he was installed. That was central to deciding to face the book: knowing the reality of the country very well. I never start a book if I have not been familiar with the subject for at least 20 years or if I have not spent about three years working on that particular subject.

When I started with "The Emperor" I already had a lot of accumulated knowledge about Ethiopia: I had studied the country for thirteen years, I had seen the Emperor several times. I did not need to do special interviews. Actually, I have never interviewed someone in my life, in the strict sense of the genre of "the interview." I don't know how an interview is done. Much of what I write about people comes from observing them, paying attention to their behavior, exploring small details such as their face, or their eyes. And to talk to them, but not to interview them.

The people I spoke with knew the emperor and told me his whole story, and those were the stories I later gathered to make the book. Unlike "The Night of Tlateloco," where Elena Poniatowska makes a log of different testimonies of different moments of that night, a chronicle document, I built a story structure. But I did not put the names of those who counted even changed the initials, so as not to compromise anyone because it was dangerous for the people speaking. Our conversations happened during the revolution, when those people were in hiding. I also ran the danger of being discovered during these meetings. But that is our job: there are risks, that are part of the trade.

## **LOOK CLOSELY**

To account for the psychological changes that occur in "The Emperor," as power corrupts man, journalism offers us tools to look closely. Thus I noticed that, by definition, the man who suffers the effects of power is innocent like the one who suddenly suffers from influenza or tuberculosis. We cannot accuse a man for getting sick: he is a victim. And politicians are completely victims of

the influence of power.

Men are not born politicians; When they are born, they are children. And as normal children they go to school and play, without distinguishing themselves from other children. IT is when they grow up and become adults who at some point decide to enter the world of politics. If we look at one of these men closely, we will see how his behavior changes, how he begins to act differently, how his vocabulary is transformed, how he acquires new ways of walking, sitting, looking at the other... We will see, in synthesis, how this man becomes a different man, so that if someone who knew him before finds him, he asks "But what happened to this man?" It happened that he entered politics and changed his personality. His only salvation is to leave the world of politics. Over time, if the government changes and this man leaves the seat of government or parliament, he can return to his normal life, be a common man again. While he inhabits the world of politics he will be an artificial man, a political man. Outside it he will be someone like the others, that one can find in a cafe talking with friends, who goes for a walk with their grandchildren. On this I wanted to focus on "The Emperor," on how politics builds the personality of man.

## **LANGUAGE AND STRUCTURE**

In that book there is no fiction. All the facts and the people that appear there are real. My only inventions in "The Emperor" were language and structure. The language, in particular, was a deliberate creation that also required me to investigate the history of the Polish language. I wanted to underline with archaic voices that authoritarianism was an outdated way of exercising power, and for that I had to build a vocabulary from the study of Polish literature of the 16th and 17th centuries. To write that book I first made another: a dictionary of ancient, lost and forgotten words, in order to emphasize that the authoritarian way of leading a country as if it were the property of the ruler is, in the contemporary world, an archaic notion.

The second conscious decision of that book was the structure on which to build it. If I'd published it as it happened, entirely, and with all my documents, I would have needed about 42 volumes, much more than the 120 pages, which it ended up being. But to such an extent no one, ever, would have read it. And, what is more important would not have been, as with any text, a selection process. As I said before, you can only make a good book if you have read a hundred times more documents and notes for each page you are going to publish. If we have 28 times more, we are not ready yet.

That is what gives strength to the text: certainty and accuracy are its power. So, if someone objects to me that I did not place this or that, I can tell you that I discarded that information by knowing it, because that was my decision for the structure of the book. I made very different choices in situation, in psychological and professional terms, of an author who receives that criticism without knowing the omitted information. That puts him in a position of weakness against the other. He who writes only what he has is not a good journalist.

## ***Part IV GLOBALIZATION***

### **TWO THEORIES FOR A PHENOMENON**

Our world is globalized more and more, and every day this process is debated where we live. Since it is not a transformation that leaves us out, it is important to understand what globalization is. Understanding it will allow us to better face what is happening in our contemporary societies. Perhaps we believe that globalization is not our business, since daily and immediate tasks occupy us so much that they do not leave us time to think about what happens beyond our home, our city or our country. However, other people have time for these reflections and make decisions that certainly affect us all.

Two main theories deal with the phenomenon of globalization. One argues that globalization does not represent something new under the sun; the other, which says it is the most important recent phenomenon in our societies.

The first theory, belong to the historical school, argues that globalization began at the very beginning of our history, when man wondered what was beyond the limit of his gaze. As he walked the earth he began to understand that the place and society where he lived were only part of a larger totality. Thus he wanted to advance on those territories and begins that were out of his immediate reach.

According to the historical school, globalization constitutes a natural part of human society. Its first representatives were the Greeks and its second important wave happened when the voyages of discovery that Christopher Columbus undertook, when Europe expanded beyond its borders and inaugurated five hundred years of colonial adventure.

It is worth mentioning, if we talk about interest in the world, that "European civilization" has always been interested in the world to a greater extent than others. Other civilizations centered their interest in themselves, lacking the ambition to know what was outside their borders. The Chinese civilization, for example, considered that its known world constituted the center of the Earth and that nothing existed beyond. In thousands of years, African civilizations did not build a single ship; they were never interested in what was happening outside their borders. Only European civilization developed this interest and these global ambitions. Columbus's travels are an example of this fact. The other important school of thought on globalization, which argues that it is a new phenomenon in human history, is based on three arguments:

- 1) Globalization as a phenomenon began to be debated recently when the Cold War came to an end. That division, which split the world into West and East lasted for the middle of the 20th century, from the end of the Second World War until the end of the 1990s. It is at that moment, when that global partition disappeared, when the entire globe could begin to connect as one. The same concept has its origins in that period: world globalization was introduced in the late 1980s by British sociologist Roland Robertson, the first to use the term in a modern sense.
- 2) The electronic revolution cleared two obstacles that impeded the path to this process of globalization: space and time. Overcome these two pitfalls and the possibility of communicating globally was opened before mankind. This is how during the last one hundred years the human family went through instances such as mass society until reaching this global or planetary society.
- 3) The victory of the neoliberal ideas within the capitalist system was fundamental to the process. Neoliberalism is based on the projection of market laws on all aspects of our lives, from which it can be followed that freedom of trade does not imply anything other than the end of all borders.

This is how liberalism contributed to the functioning of this global system.

These three conditions allow the defenders of this theory to conclude that globalization is a new phenomenon, with an age of about ten years, of which we are at its dawn. We still do not even understand very well in what direction this global change is taking us, nor can we still define this period of transition in which we live.

## **A MANIPULATIVE TERM**

Beyond these characterizations, I personally believe that the most important thing around this phenomenon is to distinguish the two ways in which it exists: as a process and as an ideology. Knowing how to discriminate the way we talk about globalization is very important, since the term is often manipulated. Certain processes have a global character, such as the development of new technologies, forms of social communication or the functioning of the economy. In these and other aspects we will undoubtedly continue in this erection. However, the term globalization is also used as an ideology, under the aspect of a magic formula to solve in the future all the problems of human beings that inhabit this planet. It is said that there will be no more suffering from hunger, poverty or inequality because all our problems will be easily solved as globalization strengthens.

A few months ago I discussed this with the American political scientist Francis Fukuyama\*. I was surprised by his way of thinking: with certainty and emphatic certainty he maintained that the problems that afflict this world can be easily solved with globalization. That is the way in which globalization is used as an ideology: building it as a new positive utopia, which nullifies any other possibility of thinking of another more human order for the societies of the world.

However, globalization is a contradictory phenomenon, which shows two different faces: it is a river of integration of all technology, of the financial world, of the media, but simultaneously it is another river in the opposite direction, which leads to disintegration with ethnic conflicts, with regional ambitions, with particular tendencies, in a great current that lives and develops against the same globalization. At the moment we know that something is happening and we have a new awareness of the globe on issues such as water and pollution; nevertheless, the forces that participate in this process have not yet found the limits of their counters; They are still floating, undefined, imprecise. The struggle to use this phenomenon for our interests and purposes remains pending.

## **THE STATE OF ORDER**

The development of this globalizing process endangers the basic organization of modern political life: the State. All contemporary societies are articulated from states: there are currently about two hundred, of which 34 have less than half a million inhabitants, the size of a small European city. These are neocolonial states, practically, which exist only with the financial help of other states and other financial organizations. That is the tendency of the contemporary world: that of multiplying these weak states.

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\* Author of "The End of History," a seminal work of Neoliberalism.

At the same time, globalization deepens the inequalities between states, since it puts those in the so-called Third World in crisis. Only economically strong societies can resist globalization, either because of the type of institutions they own or because of their political traditions. The other states that are, neither more nor less, those of Latin America, Africa, Eastern Europe and Asia are effected by globalization.

Globalization weakens the modern state through two movements: from above and from below. From above, the State suffers the attacks of corporations and international organizations, whose strength increases with this process, as a result of which more and more fundamental decisions about the future of a society are taken outside the State that organizes it. These decisions are all global, all abstract, generated in international institutions that, crucially, have not been democratically elected: none of us has participated in the selection of the authorities of the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund.

We face a kind of hidden authoritarianism, which produces as a side effect a serious disease of modern democracy: the growing disinterest of the masses in politics. The number of voters does not speak of a particular country but of the world in general decreases more and more: people do not believe since they can influence what is happening in their governments. In this way the democracies of weak states enter crisis.

If European totalitarian systems relied on mass organization to support their fundamental principles, this democratic authoritarian system works the other way around, based on the total disinterest of the masses. Everyone can do what they want, on the condition that they are not interested in politics. With a state weakened in this way, the institutions that are above the influence of our lives influence our lives.

States manage this world: organizations like the World Bank, but mainly the big international corporations. At the same time, the State undergoes a destabilization movement from below. There are forces that work with the objective of bringing it down: the various types of nationalism, regionalism, xenophobia, racism and fundamentalism.

Thus pressed from above and below, the State is transformed into a symbolic institution, such as flags and hymns, with progressively less power.

## **THE PRIVATIZATION OF VIOLENCE**

How do we get to this scenario where the emblem of the organization of our modern societies suffers from the corrosion of different forces, and their weaknesses are growing?

In addition to the political and economic reasons already mentioned, there is a fundamental cause that we must consider: The State lost the monopoly of violence.

The authority of the modern state relied on that monopoly represented by its armed forces, its police, its correctional institutions, its armaments. Now, in this new world, private forces multiply, taking the form of criminal organizations such as drug trafficking and laundering of dirty money; of private security institutions, which include all types of bodyguards; of mercenaries available for

the wars of others; of almost private guerilla movements (as it happens in the African wars), which have their own territories and financing, product of the raw materials of those occupied territories, which can be moved uncensored over the internet and that operate independently, as new forces social violence over which no one has control.

The increasing privatization of our world has deprived the State of the monopoly of violence and has generated independent mechanisms for its exercise. And these private institutions are also global. The market for goods and services does not have the exclusivity of globalization, but this phenomenon perfectly reaches coercion, violence and social insecurity.

## **GLOBAL BUREAUCRACIES**

With so many private armed security forces, with so many nationally and internationally organized criminals all mechanisms beyond the control of the state, the governments of the contemporary world lose power. As a consequence of this loss, the power of dictators no longer has the possibility of existing. Without the monopoly of violence in the hands of the state, dictators are a case of the past. Thus, we enter into a tendency towards democratization throughout the world, although many times it is hardly a proclaimed democracy. In any case, at the moment there are no conditions for dictators, military or civil authorities or representatives of a single party to govern: that era is over, or is about to end. It has been decades since a dictator appeared in our world, and when they arise they usually disappear, as the example of the Balkans proves.

We are faced with a historic political phenomenon that puts power in the hands of an international bureaucratic class. These new rulers are agile people, very well dressed, kind and smiling as appropriate to appear on television. With exceptions, these are some of the criteria of leadership in our time. No more is needed because, with the state in crisis after two hundred years as a form of dominant government, we are now governed by another type of power whose centers are created and grow outside national borders.

Nobody wants to be head of state anymore because that figure retains very little strength: true contemporary power belongs to large financial groups, to large multimedia organizations, to large international institutions. Disregarding the borders of nations, these nuclei govern our planet with mechanisms that further deepen the weakness of states.

## **BORDER: A WORD OF THE PAST**

"Border" is a very broad word: we have psychological borders, language borders, and race borders. And of course, we have the borders of the states, which in turn have numerous varieties. A border was generally a line drawn to defend the identity of a state or a civilization. For example, the Roman Empire had its limits, which divided the territory into the Roman world and the world of barbarians. But when we talk about borders today, the term no longer has the utility it had for the Romans.

Several reasons explain that, in this global world, the term is perceived as something of the past. The first is the technological revolution that thanks to network communications, the development of the Internet and the massiveness of email managed to overcome all borders. The second is the

financial flows that cross the world. The third, the great migratory movements embodied by those human beings who leave their lands and march out of necessity to other better developed places. This process, for the moment, has no other solution.

But the characteristics of the borders that continue to exist as such have also changed. For example, in Europe the border between the old communist camp and the west used to be very strict, but now it has become a flexible scene of intense activity. And if we travel through Africa, it is enough to offer twenty dollars to any border guard to obtain a visa automatically, something that before was very difficult to obtain.

That is to say, when it did not disappear, the concept of borders was assimilated to that of business. The lines that are currently drawn correspond to trade, regulate the exchange, which gives new meaning to the old term. The tendency is probably that the border will be transformed, with the passing of a few years, into a symbolic term.

## **AFTER SEPTEMBER 11**

But perhaps the main question that arises when we talk about this new global world corresponds to the scenario that is emerging from the attacks of September 11, 2001 in the United States. I would like to make a brief introduction before addressing the issue, since in my opinion the new problems we face are rooted in the end of the Cold War.

At the end of this confrontation between the systems of dictatorships and democracy, the theory that made Francis Fukuyama famous, in his book "The End of History" appeared. If history was the struggle between dictatorships and democracies, now that one fell and the other triumphed, nothing more would have to be done, according to the American political scientist. The rest of human history would be quite boring. On that basis, world culture and philosophy of the 1990s gave rise to different visions of life as entertainment: history is over, that is, conflicts are over and there's nothing left but consumption and fun.

The media serve this principle. A renowned American communication specialist, Neil Postman, published "Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business," a book about the abundant entertainment we have, and why it will kill us with laughter. Ten consecutive years of economic development in key centers of world capitalism produced a huge amount of goods that have to be sold; for that, it is necessary for consumption to grow, and quiet consumerism requires entertainment.

But towards the end of the decade a new theory came out to argue with the notions of Fukuyama and his theoretical descendants. It is the work of another American political scientist, Samuel Huntington, who argued history cannot end, because human beings are still here. However, the story will not be as we knew it during the Cold War: this new story will present other conflicts, which will not be between states but between the eight civilizations that, according to Huntington, exist in the world.

We must remember that this vision of history based on civilizations is not new. It was developed in the 20th century by Briton Arnold Toynbee in the volumes of his famous study of history. He postulated that the story of the events of societies cannot be articulated within nations but in

broader frameworks: different civilizations. According to Toynbee, 36 existed in the history of mankind\*. According to Huntington, eight currently exist together†.

In the new theoretical situation that this author postulates, two of them are of utmost importance in the struggle of civilizations, because they resist submitting to the system of American civilization: Chinese and Muslim, which have certain characteristics for which the values of American society cannot penetrate.

In addition, these civilizations influence the future existence of American society, each for a crucial reason. In the case of China, because it constitutes the largest and most dynamic nation in the world: it is so powerful demographically and geographically, its values of work organization and progress are so ingrained, representing a potential danger to the United States. Islamic civilization, on the other hand, is dangerous because it controls 90 percent of the world's oil: entering into conflict with this civilization is, for American civilization, risking its external sources of oil supply and, therefore, putting itself in danger.

Finally, the world after September 11, 2001 can also be seen through a third theory, which belongs to the American Joseph Nye: we are going to a world that repeats, to some extent, the history of ancient Rome. According to Nye, we live in a new bipolarity, where they oppose the new Rome, enclosed within its limits, and the barbarians. But, by the way, this debate is so alive that every month several new books on globalization appear in the world; You will see what theory you prefer to choose, for your own consumption in order to understand our time.

## **VILLAGE MENTALITY**

There is a scale aspect of human thought that, I believe, should be incorporated into the debate on globalization. For thousands of years the human mind was shaped to be effective in small worlds: we lived in very small communities and tribes, of thirty or fifty people, according to the archaeological discoveries. It was a world of small communities that moved in search of food, trying to survive, the links were limited to the family itself or the tribe and its nearby neighbors. The man thought he knew everyone because he knew his community; he ignored the existence of other societies and died with the conviction that he knew all the people.

Thus the structure of our imagination was created. And suddenly, in the last thirty years an avalanche of information, images and data attacked our mentality, which could not absorb and process so much. That is why we find it very problematic to embrace global thoughts. But the mentality must change with the story. Nobody builds cathedrals, for example, because they represented an idea of imagination as an unlimited field, which has a historical determination and has lost its validity; Nor is music composed like that of the Middle Ages because today our imagination is different from what the people of that time had.

And today this changing phenomenon that is the imagination has to change scale, move from the

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\* Toynbee's masterwork "A Study of History" counts 28 civilizations: 19 major, four "abortive" and five "arrested"

† According to Huntington the eight civilizations are Sinic, Japanese, Hindu, Islamic, Orthodox, Western, Latin America, and Africa.



small world to the big world. The great effort that this requires will not be fulfilled from one day to the next. Here is the problem with which we collide today: we are not able to think about those global and planetary scales, but we live in a very diversified, complicated and unstable world where our things can easily change as a result of events that do not depend on us.

A man knows he has no influence on big things. He is limited to small ones because he understands them and can work with them. This tendency to limit thinking is a symbol of our inability to understand the world in which we live, a world already globalized. We think we live in a small village, on a short street, in a house.

In those sizes our imagination moves. This is the central contradiction of the human mind.

## **JOURNALISM, LOCAL AND GLOBAL**

As journalists, the tension between the local and global touches us particularly. For those who work in the center of world events, everything that happens there automatically has value in itself. But for those of who work in the great periphery, it is very important to understand that we must seek the universal in any subject, that which reveals the whole world in a drop of water. Because a drop of water contains the world, but you have to know how to find the world in a drop of water.

Every time we propose to write about a topic, we must ask ourselves what is universal: which metaphor, symbol or sign that allows us to go from small to large. We must make a reflection because only if we find this link, this passage between the local and the universal, our text will have weight and value. Only then will the reader discover in our text, along with the specific story, a universal message, a clue that will help you decipher the laws of the world.

Why do some texts live a hundred years and other texts die the day after their publication?

There is one big difference between the two: the text that live a hundred years are those in which the author showed, through a small detail, the universal dimension, whose greatness lasts. Texts that lack this dimension disappear.

It is important to keep this universality requirement in mind when collecting the material, while we investigate our subjects. It is a matter of talent, of intuition, but also of breadth of consciousness, of wisdom. And, above all, it is the secret so that some texts last and others are lost in oblivion.

## ***Part V WORKSHOP QUESTIONS***

## IN SEARCH OF METHOD

### DID YOU KEEP OR KEEP A PERSONAL DIARY?

No, for several reasons. The first is purely technical: the routine of the news agency correspondent occupies both day and night, it is so hard and difficult that it did not allow me time to write in a diary. After a day's work, especially in tropical countries, where the weather is very hard, I arrived at the hotel dead of fatigue. The second is more personal: I am in favor of writing substantial, very brief, almost aphoristically. Doing so requires an intense selection of material, and that selection is best made using our memory.

Let me tell you a story about the great Russian author Maxim Gorky, who used to guide young writers. One of those pupils, Konstantin Paustovsky, who would later become famous, approached him and asked him to read his first stories and tell him his opinion. Gorky read the stories, called Paustovsky and said "Look, my young friend: in your writing there is talent that feels, but it is still very youthful. My advice is to travel within Russia, to live and work for ten years without writing. Don't even take notes. Nothing. The important things that happen to you will be fixed in your memory. And it certainly won't be worth writing about if you don't remember." I have followed this advice because I think there are so many ways to write as people who write. Everyone has his or her own way of writing. Everyone must have it.

I know there are good diarists, including those in which very meticulous notes have been written, such as "I woke up in the morning, drank coffee and went to work." Those diaries belong to people with a rich psychological life that gives them the ability to make beautiful accounts of those records. Also noteworthy are the diaries that rarely occur in history: those that are taken in times of great events, not war or in extreme situations such as prison, very climactic moments in which each event has, in addition to its real importance, a symbolic or metaphorical dimension. But out of those cases, very few is the diary that deserves to integrate into the whole of great literature.

The last reason why I did not keep diaries is that when you write, what you pointed at in the moment is gone: the atmosphere and the weather are gone and what remains is lifeless text - what is the relationship between that and poetry? I move like a poet, publishing my verses through the literary press *Polo*. Occasionally, still, I keep writing poetry. I have a volume done and I am getting to the point of gathering poems for a new one\*. I do it because for me poetry is a branch of literature of great importance. The only people really taking care of the language's wealth, precision and anger are the poets. A novelist can write when he has imagined the story, when he has delineated the characters, when he has defined the essence of the work. But for a poet, language is the most essential.

Therefore, if you want to master the language, if you want to write a beautiful book, you have to read poetry constantly, you have to be in permanent contact with the poetic imagination, with the taste of the word that this genre gives you. There is no other connection to the beauty and

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\* "The Notebook" was Kapuscinski's first collection of his poems published, in 1986. The second volume came out in 2006 as "The Laws of Nature." Additional collections have come out since his death.

richness of language than poetry. That is why I have not read novels for years, but I still read poetry because there I find my language and refresh it. In front of you, you were practicing journalism when you knew where you wanted to direct your career since it was not an event or a conscious decision with a particular one.

Our paths develop with us, while we work without thinking about them. However, it is possible and important for our work as a whole to create a folder in which we gather our work, so that from time to time we can review them and see if we are going in the direction we want to follow or not. It is valuable to encourage such ambitions, although not all of us can be Ernest Hemingway. But we can all maintain the stimulus of this ambition; the desire to create something beyond publishing our material daily and seeing it disappear the next day. There are so many newspapers in the world, where thousands and thousands of headlines come out over thousands and thousands of articles... Everything is lost, without the possibility of finding it later, unless each one takes the job of preserving it.

You have to feel pride and respect for what you do and write, because I don't know any other way to improve one's practice than to reflect from time to time. Read, for example, the notes produced during a period and ask yourself if what you have written is really up to what you wanted to write. And if the answer is no, also ask why it was not, what happened or is happening. My approach builds something like a book with its own words, although it is not necessarily a book to publish. It can be used to learn. The seriousness of our self-criticism helps the development of the journalist, so as not to write a thing one day one takes the job of preserving it.

One of the great dangers of this profession is routine. One learns to write a story quickly, and then runs the risk of stagnating, of being satisfied with being able to write a story in a couple of hours, convinced that that is all that journalism offers and requires. In my opinion this is a very dangerous vision of our professional practice. Journalism is, on the contrary, an act of creation.

## **WHY HAVE YOU NOT WRITTEN NOVELS OR OTHER FORMS OF FICTION LITERATURE?**

I write poetry, but I've never tried to write novels because I don't have that kind of talent. I don't know how to write a novel, nor a play. It's funny: many of my books are adapted to the theater, but I've never been able to develop an original play.

Perhaps the underlying reason is that real life seems fascinating to me, I am a poor reporter who, unfortunately, lacks imagination as a writer: if I had, I would never have gone to these terrible places where I was. That is why most novels seem very boring to me compared to the diversity of events that can be found in the world.

It is very difficult to find some really sound contemporary novel that contributes to our knowledge. Who can mention the name of a great French writer of our day? I only hear the silence. And yet, in the newspaper *Le Monde* every day a new French novel is announced. In France, then, 365 novels must appear a year. And I ask again if anyone can mention one not 365, but only one of those novels. Again, silence.

Personally, my search is oriented to other fields, those in which the techniques of literary expression are used in combination with other genres, a new type of literature that is in

defilement and that is difficult to fix with a label. But that can be submitted to another classification, a criterion for me more useful and valuable: not if it is one or not or canon, but if it is a good book or a bad book.

## **HOW DID YOU GET INTERESTED IN JOURNALISM, AND THEN CHOOSE TO BE A WAR CORRESPONDENT**

I wouldn't know how to say it. I think I was born with this job, I didn't choose it. My first contacts with the written word were given to me by poetry, which I published since I went to school. After World War II, when the press began to be reorganized in Poland, people who could write our country were searched for had few people who had any literary culture; We also lost almost all intelligence during the war and went from school directly to the newspaper.

When they took me, I had turned eighteen: so early I started in this profession. When I was not in a position to choose something different, I was sentenced to this job since my childhood, and so I continue. Some time later I went to be a war correspondent, certainly not for love of conflict but for labor obligations. The life of a war correspondent is not only dangerous, but very hard, very painful and unpleasant.

## **HOW DID YOU WORK IN THE MIDDLE OF TWO SIDES FACING A WAR?**

When I started my job as a correspondent, I already had, in fact, experience in wars. I suffered the first as a child: World War II. It was a terrible situation. My family and I were refugees; we fled, for four and a half years, from the Nazis and the Soviets. My memories are of constant hunger. We spent several days without eating. During the cold we were in great danger: if one does not get fed, the cold kills him. That was one of the reasons why there were so many victims in the Soviet concentration camps where Stalin locked them up: they stayed there and died of the cold.

When World War II ended and peace began, I didn't know what that was: I thought war was the natural state of life. I was surprised that suddenly there were no deaths, gunshots, bombings, or hunger. All these things seemed very strange to me.

With that memory I arrived, many years later, at my job as a war correspondent. I did not choose it, but it was part of the mission I was fulfilling as a foreign correspondent. Since I was working for a very poor Polish agency, which could not keep correspondents in all countries, such as Reuters or the Associated Press, it was my turn to cover a whole continent in a day on more than one occasion. So I was in Latin America, in Africa, in Asia.

After my first two trips as a special envoy in 1956, to India, Pakistan and Afghanistan; the second to China, Japan, and the Philippines I returned to Poland but they immediately sent me abroad again. That is how I went to Ghana in 1957, because at the time it became the first country that gained its independence on the continent. After covering the events that that initiated the process of creating an independent Africa, I continued to deal with the problems of the continent until 1972 when they sent me as a permanent correspondent. I spent several years there, which were very hectic times: there were many wars, many coups, and many revolutions. My situation was very difficult: if you are usually a correspondent in a country to work on the information of that

place, I had the entire continent with its 42 countries. And in each one something happened, so I had to move from one place to another, covering wars, coups and revolutions. That is why I maintain that I did not choose to be a war correspondent, but I had to do it.

And I was in those places in the second half of the twentieth century, a century that will go down in history as the time of dictatorships, authors, and evil humanity, but that in its second half precisely hosts a unique event of human history: the liberation of the majority of peoples living under colonial systems. Never before has there been anything like this and will never be repeated. It was my turn to witness that enormous process.

If we take a map of the world of the early twentieth century and a contemporary one, we will see that they show two completely different worlds. IN the first map there are few independent countries and the rest live in different forms of dependence, colonial or semicolonial. On the map according to countries that live under independent systems. That was the effect of decolonization: the birth of the political scene of dozens of relationships. A great event that, in addition, was accompanied by the migration from the countryside to the cities. At the beginning of the 20th century, the world urban population was 15% and today it is 75%.

## **WHAT ARE THE MAIN DANGERS OF JOURNALISM IN EXTREME CONDITIONS?**

There is much talk about the dangers of the war correspondent, and there are good reasons to discuss the issue. Each year about 100 journalists who voluntarily cover the war die on different battlefields. We go to these danger scenarios for different reasons but always without any obligation and always with fear. I have not yet found someone who in those circumstances is not afraid. We all feel it. Fear is an emotion that must be recognized and respected, because it is very human. The only difference appears when some know how to control it and others don't. Those are unable to control fear leave the trade: they resign and leave it. Those who know how to control it form a small group: journalists who have been dedicated to covering wars for years and who know and help each other.

Among the main dangers of journalism in extreme conditions, I would mention the high degree of accidents due to the characteristics of war in places like Africa or Asia, As in any war, a tremendous disorder reigns and it is possible to be attacked or fall dead in these circumstances; but, in addition, in these wars there are no visible borders and it is not possible to know from which part the attack will arrive. In these places ambushes are used and one can be injured in any way: the fire can be opened while one walks along a path.

Another danger to highlight are land mines. It is a horrific weapon of modern wars. In the world it is calculated, there are two million land mines in the ground. An economic reason explains this abundance: they are cheap weapons that cost between four and five dollars. It also contributes to the fact that they are easy to handle and plant: a child can place them. But removing them is difficult and expensive.

In countries like Somalia, for example, all regions are planted with mines because there are no resources available to clean the land. The frequent victims of these weapons, which kill and maim, are children who play without knowing what danger they face and livestock. This, in turn, creates hunger: tribes that live on grazing remain empty-handed when their cattle die from stepping on

mines. Finally, these weapons destroy the communication structure of these countries, because they are planted on the routes.

Children constitute, in themselves, another danger: children, who are more cruel and irresponsible soldiers than a mature man because they lack the survival instinct, fight some of these wars. Before starting an offensive, these children are given many drugs to turn them into fearless troops, really dangerous troops because they go directly to death.

These boys arrive in the army because it is the only place they can eat. They have no parents; their mothers have ten children like them. They are delivered to their fate. Therefore, to survive they try to enlist in the troops. There they have food and a place in the world, and they feel important because they wield a Kalashnikov or any other weapon. If they reach a village, they terrify everyone: people run away or give them what they ask for, and that gives them a sense of strength and power that they enjoy.

When a war correspondent has no other way to get to the battlefields than guided by those drugged children, he faces the serious possibility of dying. His dilemma is to go with them or not go, which means breaching his duties as a journalist. But going implies the possibility that they can kill him: it is in the hands of people who, when they have a truck, for example, drive it at two hundred kilometers per hour without looking at anything, often killing themselves. There is much unnecessary death, death that does not even happen in the struggle: mere waste of human life.

But in addition to these risks to which we are exposed, the toughest aspect of war correspondent work is normal living conditions. They are terrible: there is nothing to eat, or a place to sleep; there are no medicines if one gets sick, an aggravating factor for the enormous distances that must be traveled since, generally, these wars occur in places separated from the so-called civilization. A nearby hospital can be 900 kilometers away, which must be traveled on roads that are not in good condition. In short, if one is injured in these conditions, he will most likely die. It is very difficult to endure. Also in another sense: even if you don't get killed, you end up tired of such experiences.

### **SOME SCENES FROM YOUR BOOKS NARRATE OCCASIONS WHEN YOU WERE ABOUT TO LOSE YOUR LIFE. WHAT LED YOU TO PUT YOURSELF AT RISK?**

It was not love of violence or human tragedies, but a very simple reason: I walked the world as a journalist in very hectic times. On every continent, in each country, many things happened, and they sent me specifically to cover them. That was my job. I had to move from one war to another, so I titled one of my books "From One War to the Other."\* It was not for pleasure, then, but for duty. But that experience allowed me to understand something very important: that death is a very important life experience. It is very difficult to express this, but living these kinds of events influences the character of man.

There are two types of extreme situations, which generate very different feelings and experiences: one, when being in a danger zone there is an awareness that someone can kill us; another, when one already knows that he is going to die, because he has been condemned by a verdict, and only

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\* I'm not sure which book Kapuscinski is referring to here, but the closest one I can think of is "Another Day in Life."

awaits the outcome with the certainty that he is going through the last moments of life. I felt this, and I narrated it in my work. It is a terribly hard experience, but I got the impression that the human body has mechanisms that anesthetize us inside at that time. People who know they are going to die, like the damned, do not resist because they are already totally paralyzed, they are already dead. The only thing missing is physical death.

## **HOW DID YOU SURVIVE THOSE SITUATIONS OF RISK OR IMMINENT DEATH?**

Fortunately I believe in luck. In my life, in fact, there are many events without explanation, many aspects of which reason cannot account for. What happens when, in the same circumstance, one survives and another dies? There is no rational explanation for that, nothing one can say will have scientific support. Many people fell around me, and not me. I was asked why and I don't know how to explain. That mystery of luck is part of the richness of our life.

## **WHAT DOES WAR MEAN TO YOU?**

Many things. First, because the world wars changed a lot: large-scale conflicts are over and for twenty years we have not had any serious war between states in the world. There are small border skirmishes, but nothing more. There was a kind of projection of postmodernism to the field of wars, so that the phenomenon dispersed and in the absence of great wars we have numerous internal armed conflicts, more than sixty in the contemporary world. Second, a parallel event deepened the transformations: the privatization of violence. Every day, conflict constitutes a private matter between individuals.

## **HOW CAN JOURNALISM COVER WARS OR CONFLICTS WITHOUT FUELING THE HATRED AND GRUDGES THAT WILL GENERATE THEM?**

That depends on the awareness and responsibility of the media. If they seek human and positive solutions, they should commit themselves to knowing deeply the problems and the reasons for these situations and never using the language of hate that fuels the armed conflict.

With respect to journalists in situations of this type, their first characteristic to procure or preserve is that of being human, and speaking or writing with a language of understanding and understanding of peace, without using hate or stimulating revenge. I think that our role, when we write about war, is to remember and understand that we are facing a tragic situation for all its participants. War is the only human phenomenon in which all are victims, all lose, all end up unhappy. Also, once a war begins it is very difficult to end it. There are wars that take thirty years with no prospect of ending. When one writes about these societies destroyed for years, for generations, one must take into account what they suffer, the misfortune they suffer, the garaged they are going for.

## **HOW DID YOU DEAL WITH LONELINESS DURING YOUR LIFE AS A JOURNALIST AND HOW IMPORTANT WAS LOVE IN THESE MOMENTS?**

I always have problems answering questions like this, because I don't suffer loneliness in the work of the correspondent. There is so much work, always so much to do that one lives surrounded by work. The only loneliness that exists for me is to be part of a crowd. With myself I do not feel lonely: I have so many things to analyze and do, so many ideas to review, that I am always short of time. On the other hand, when I am among people I feel really alone.

I think that feeling comes from the fear of being assaulted, attacked, crushed. In those moments I feel that the world has abandoned me. But with regard to work, I would say that there are two laws for the international reporter: the first is that he always travels alone; the second, be within the culture about which you have to report.

It is very important that no person accompanies us because that company, no matter how dear it is, influences with its behavior and its words in our perception of the world. We can only make an image of what we have to narrate when we are alone in the face of fact or people. Equally decisive is knowing that society in which a fact that we must narrate has happened: we must be inside in the textual sense, with all the mentality, the memory, the passions.

We must try to be as close as possible to those events that happen to peoples culturally alien to us. I insist with the need to develop a feeling of empathy: we have to try to be in 100% within the environment to which they sent us, because to understand some cultures we must try to live them. A reporter must be among the lens on which he will write. The majority of the inhabitants of the world live in very hard and terrible conditions, and if we do not share them we have no right according to my morals and my philosophy, at least to write.

I remember when I arrived in a village in Senegal, in Africa, something I talk about in my work.\* As there was no electricity, you had to buy a small Chinese lantern that cost one dollar. But nobody in that village had one dollar. When night came, people gathered. From seven o'clock they began to tell stories, and although they had neither television nor the Internet, they enjoyed something as valuable in that beautiful, poetic moment.

At eleven o'clock at night everyone went to sleep, something that for a reporter constituted a really hard experience, not counting what also happened during the night. They slept on the floor of pure earth, in small adobe houses, accommodating an entire family, which means many people. But between the terribly hot night and the mosquito invasion it was impossible to sleep, so one complained still until the sun appeared at six in the morning. For the common good, for public opinion, and for the very cause of history. It was a rather difficult experience, but if I did not share it I could not have understood life in Africa. If I'd spent the night at the Hilton or at the Sheraton, I would not have been aware of all those facts I had seen. The profession of reporter has to be able to write and to feel these experiences in their skin.

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\* This visit is recounted in Kapuscinski's book "The Shadow of the Sun."



## **CENSORSHIP**

### **WHAT TO DO WHEN ONE HAS INVESTED TIME AND WORK INVESTIGATING A CASE TO WHICH THE MEDIUM, BEING IMPORTANT AND SETTING AN AGENDA, DECIDES TO GRANT LITTLE SPACE?**

I will use the word censorship, because it is the situation that occurs in cases like this. In all the press, really in all media, there is censorship. And when we have to make a decision: publish or not. The journalists who lived under the communist system battled fifty years of government censorship, which gave us great experience in this regard.

In this case the dilemma we face is to allow them to cut our history and thus, censored, appear in a newspaper with large circulation or publish the entire story in a magazine with 500 readers. We will always have these ethical tensions in our conscience, which will make us wonder how it is appropriate to act in these conditions.

In countries where censorship existed, the system provided the solution to the dilemma: it was allowed to publish these stories, but only in magazines with small circulation. We could publish anything with only one condition: that no more than one hundred copies be published. When a journalist brought a report to a newspaper of large circulation, the censorship office would say "Sir, that cannot be published here. But you can publish it in a small magazine."

It is true that, if we cut history, certain things will be missing; but much more valuable thing will appear in a newspaper of large circulation. The impact of that story, even partially published in an important medium, will be greater than if it came out with all its truth in a magazine that very few people read and calculate what will be better. Surely it will reach, although reduced, the greatest number of readers it can.

The larger the newspaper, the TV channel, the radio station, the greater the censorship. Those mediums always put other interests before the truth. And in that game there is no good answer. We must fight and negotiate, because there is no other solution than to make the best commitments we can for our professional mission.

### **WHAT CAN YOU TELL ABOUT YOUR OWN CONFRONTATIONS WITH CENSORSHIP AND HOW THEY WERE RESOLVED?**

The censorship was very hard for journalists who worked under communism, but over the years we learned to combat it. On the other hand, there were times when, due to the internal struggles of the ruling party, some more liberal groups emerged, which allowed periods in which more could be written. But for foreign correspondents the situation was different, because the dictatorship was interested in knowing what was happening in the world, so we wrote the whole truth. Censorship came later: it was for the public, but not for government leaders.

Agency journalists wrote everyone from Africa, Latin America or anywhere else in the world. We

sent the news to the headquarters, in my case to Warsaw, and there was a division of what we had written: a part, authorized, was published; the other was printed in special bulleting, which were not sold on the street but reached a small group of leaders. This selection took place outside of our knowledge and our participation.

Censorship has a long history, with nuances to tell because not all communist countries had it formally. In the Soviet Union, paradoxically, it was not necessary to create a special instance: the same newspaper, radio station or TV channel acted as the censor. The ruling party sent its people to the posts of editor-in-chiefs and they practically exercised the role of filter. Many Russians learned Polish to read our press, because compared to theirs it was free. Even in the 1980s, during the time of the Solidarity movement, our press was banned in the Soviet Union.

It was not easy to work under the socialist regime. Poland was a poorer country than Czechoslovakia or Hungary, and to balance that situation we had more freedom, although censorship existed institutionally. Let's say we knew how to cheat the system. For example, when I published "The Emperor," it initially went for deliveries at the newspaper's literary seminar; readers believed it was an allegory for the power of the Central Committee. At that time there was a law whereby once the text went through censorship, it could not be censored again: when the published for delivery. "The Emperor" became very innocent pieces, which only when appearing together, as a book, were very critical of the ruling class.

But as it had already passed through censorship for publication in the newspaper, the text could not be subject to scrutiny a second time. However, censorship found a method to attack this book: limit its circulation.

There were other very critical literary works that were published as examples: to demonstrate to the Western world that in the country we knew freedom of expression. In those cases, censorship allowed a circulation of 100 to 500 copies. In that way, it could not be said that the books had not been published; at the same time, in practice no reader could access them.

Some things could not be touched. For example, criticism could not be offered on topics of the Soviet Union: those matters were completely prohibited. On other subjects the truth could be expressed freely. For example, nobody was very interested in what was happening in Africa, because it was far away and did not jeopardize the reigning powers: very few dealt with what was written about the Congo, Senegal or Nigeria.

Different factors determined the limits and possibilities of our work: time, method and theme. Those of us who worked in the system knew more or less how to write in that environment. Journalists and writers did not live in a dark world of censorship, but in a permanent conflict, a constant struggle for the right to publish some of the truth.

That is why I believe that the worst experience of those times was self-censorship. Leaving the daily fight to find a way of expression implied a psychological situation of resignation in the face of adversity we were experiencing. Say, for example: "I will not write this, because censorship will not allow me to publish it anyway." Beyond the damage to society caused by censorship as an institution, we also suffered the damage of self-censorship that triggered our internal silence mechanisms. And although people of little talent were shielding themselves in the controls so as not to write certain things, it is true that in general the censorship produced a negative influence

on all those who dedicated ourselves to literary and journalistic production. But there were also people who not only fought against censorship, but also fought their internal censor, perhaps more dangerous than the external mechanism.

## **DECONSTRUCTING DILEMMAS**

### **WHAT IS THE MAIN CHALLENGE FACING A JOURNALIST IN THIS NEW AGE OF INFORMATION?**

The main challenge for a journalist is always to achieve excellence in their professional quality and ethical content. Changed is the means of collecting information and finding out, transmitting and communicating, but the heart of our profession remains the same: the struggle and effort for good professional quality and high ethical content. The journalist has the same purpose as always: to inform. Do your job well so that the reader can understand the world around him, to find out, to teach him, to educate him.

### **HOW DO YOU EVALUATE THE TRAINING OF JOURNALISTS TODAY?**

Our trade has changed greatly in the last twenty years. As I noted before, journalism used to be the heritage of a small group of people admired by their society, who exercised it as an intellectual and political activity. With the technological revolution that affected communications, today many people exercise journalism or, rather, work in the media.

Our profession became massive, as a result of which now anyone is a journalist. In each town there is a church and a journalism school. They are all journalists: everyone writes, everyone makes radio, everyone conducts programs. There can hardly be quality in such a picture. Although in Europe and Latin America we have very good newspapers, magazines, television and radio stations, the bulk of journalism remains at another level. If almost one million people work in the world's media, there will be about ten thousand good people.

### **WHAT DO YOU THINK OF OBJECTIVITY?**

Two schools of journalism in the history of the world have defended different philosophies and recognized different roots: the Anglo-Saxon school of journalism and that of continental European journalism.

The first conceives of the press as the fourth estate: together with the executive, the legislative and the judicial, journalism participates in modern societies as we know them. The force of this current is precisely the so-called objectivity: the news that presents the facts as they happened must be presented separately from the comment that interprets them from a specific point of view. Each newspaper that subscribes to these principles organizes its journalists into two categories: those who write the pure news and columnists. The latter, normally, are mature journalists who have reached a certain position in their career; the others write the news of the day.

These new phenomena mark the changes that are happening in journalism. The second school sees the press as another actor in the political struggle: European newspapers were born as instruments of parties and governments. That is why they did not hide the fact that they were not independent; on the contrary, its strength was represented in the defense of an ideal or a cause. For this conception that tries to convince the reader, news and commentary do not exist separately, but an article must have the purpose of not only informing but also exposing the ideas and positions of the author.

Currently, in the world press there is a mixture of these two philosophies, so that in the European press objectivity is a natural fact but not an obsession.

On a more personal level, I feel that this theory called objectivity is totally false and produces cold, dead texts that convince no one. I am in favor of writing with passion. The more emotion, the better for the reader. I have no doubt about this: the best journalistic texts have been written with passion, convey that one is truly linked and involved in the subject of which he writes. Emotion gives strength to the text.

### **WHAT TRENDS DO YOU SEE IN CURRENT JOURNALISM, TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE STREET REPORTER AND THE NASCENT INTERNET REPORTER, WHO CAN WORK FROM HOME?**

These new phenomena mark the changes that are happening in journalism, which are naturally associated with the changes that take place in the world. But in my opinion, true journalism is that of living contact with people and situations: that direct knowledge forms the basis of serious reporting and literary ambitions.

The Internet offers immediate access to information; it serves a lot to accelerate the transmission of data, to spread them quickly throughout the world. However, accumulating a huge amount of information does not replace reasoning, reflection or understanding. We are in danger of reaching a situation in which the data abounds but our imagination does not know how to process and use them in our practical life. This contradiction synthesizes the drama of our culture: we accumulate more and more data more and more quickly, but doing so does not help us understand or improve the world.

In 1994, The International Sociological Association organized their World Congress in the German city of Bielefeld on the theme of organized violence in the world. There were five thousand presentations on robberies, mafias, poverty and organized violence; five thousand presentations each of which was full of data. But having accommodated everything specialists knew about this issue did not help us, in the years that followed, to be even one step ahead in the direction of progress.

We must be on guard before those who try to create a new type of myth, according to which the development of the media will solve the problems of humanity. Installing computers connected to the Internet in poor Africa will not end once and for all the problems of the continent. We cannot be fooled by that false utopia that some are building in front of our eyes and our conscience. The real problems of contemporary societies, especially those in developing ones, are not resolved

with the Internet.

### **WHY DO YOU THINK CYNICS DO NOT WORK FOR THIS JOB, AS A BOOK THAT COLLECTS THEIR OPINIONS ON JOURNALISM IS TITLED?**

I don't think a real journalist can be cynical. In fact, during all my life I didn't even know one who was, and let me say that I dealt with several.

That is because our professional success depends on others: we cannot be cynical because the sphere in which we develop our profession is built between us and others. There everything is played: people look at us and evaluate us, constantly, and notice the difference between a journalist who asks about problems that really concern him and another who came to the place to get a couple of answers without any commitment, and leave. Without empathy, that ability to immediately feel like one of the family, it is not possible to share the pains, problems, sufferings and joys of people.

I insist: the type of relationship we establish with the other will define our work: if we fail in this sense, we cannot do our profession well; conversely, if we establish intense and rich human exchanges, we will find the source of our material.

### **WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE CONTEMPORARY WRITER?**

The writer's situation changed unfavorably. Before, his duty was limited to the creation of his books; now he not only writes but also must find editorial, waste time on the promotion, make his own criticisms. We practically become slaves to the profession, with little chance of devoting ourselves freely to writing.