

Many new technologies, employed by myriad interest groups, have transformed how nation speaks unto nation and how public opinion is shaped. By jet travel, fax, cellular telephone, satellite, portable uplink, electronic data-transfer, computer networks, video and audio cassette, as well as radio and television, there are now streams of information between business people, currency speculators, medical experts, environmentalists, scholars, writers, journalists, political dissidents, religious fundamentalists, drug dealers, advertising and public-relations people—within nations and among nations. Their volume far exceeds information controlled by governments.

In the Moscow coup of 1991, loyalists used a private, national computer network with Western connections, as well as fax machines and portable radio-transmitters to mobilize support for Yeltsin. When the KGB shut down newspapers and radio stations, Yeltsin backers taped 10-minute newscasts and slipped them to the BBC and Radio Liberty, to be played in the West and back into Russia. Eduard Shevardnadze said afterwards: "Praise be information technology! Praise be CNN!"

Even in closed nations, the public has vastly increased sources of information than formerly. Portable phones and message-beepers are flooding China. In Beijing, satellite dishes are sprouting on thousands of rooftops, able to receive a new BBC Asian channel as well as CNN. When television is too conspicuous, new miniaturization has increased the influence of short-wave radio. The Ayatollah Khomeini's overthrow of the Shah was preceded by a secret blizzard of audio cassettes recorded by him, mailed to mullahs and disseminated by them to the Shi'ite faithful.

The public in any nation comprises many interest groups, and all are mobilized more efficiently by the new communications to plead their cases.

Television soars over and among all these groups, distilling the most newsworthy bits of all their information; capriciously alighting here, departing there; dramatizing this issue, ignoring that one; governed by the need to be fresh and to attract an audience. It seeks out controversy, violence and all the heartaches of the world in an insatiable appetite for novelty. Those with an idea to sell, a cause to push or an outrage to call to the world's attention, seek out television. In Somalia, it was not merely the pictures that wrung the hearts of our public: the pictures were made more eloquent by the words of Audrey Hepburn of UNICEF and Mary Robinson of Northern Ireland.

Chief among those who seek out television are governments and politicians, because it has become indispensable. For political leaders in modern democracies to complain of television, is like Angelo in *Measure for Measure* condemning fornication, while he plots it himself. Governments are not virgins in television. They are in bed with it—in *flagrante delicto*.