

E. San Juan Jr. Marcos and the media

When Ferdinand Marcos imposed his dictatorship on 44 million Filipinos in September 1972 and abolished all democratic processes and civil liberties, among the first major victims to succumb were the press and the mass media.

On the eve of the proclamation of martial law, leading mass-circulation dailies, weekly magazines and journals, radio and television stations, were shut down by soldiers in full combat gear. Thousands of journalists, editors, radio and television personnel were arrested and thrown into jail without due process. Up to this day, distinguished individuals like Saturnino Ocampo, Levy Balgos de la Cruz, Roger Arrienda and Mila Astorga-Garcia are still confined in the military stockade. Professors Renato Constantino, Dolores S. Feria, Ricardo Lee, Rogelio Mangahas, and many others are under house arrest or constant surveillance. Those who initially escaped the dragnet of the military are now actively engaged in underground work, exercising those freedoms deemed anathema by the authorities.

Today, despite Marcos' claims that press freedom has been restored, the reality belies such official pronouncements: in December 1976, just to cite one instance, Marcos ordered the closing of two church publications—the last free publications left: *Signs of the Times*, a mimeographed weekly put out by the Association of Major Religious Superiors of the Philippines (the largest Catholic organisation, which has documented the torture of over 15,000 political prisoners), and *The Communicator*, a weekly newsletter published by the Jesuits. Marcos also ordered the closing of two church-operated radio stations in the dissidence-torn areas of Tagum, Davao and Malaybalay, Bukidnon, in both of which the Catholic bishops are the most militant critics of the martial law regime.

More significant for the international press was the expulsion in November 1976, of Associated Press Bureau Chief Arnold Zeitlin, followed in March 1977 by the denial of a visa to Bernard

Wideman, correspondent for the *Far Eastern Economic Review* and the *Washington Post*.

How did Marcos engineer this unprecedented overthrow of what was widely considered 'the freest press in Asia' in America's 'show-case of democracy'? What are the prospects of recovering rights of free speech and untrammelled exchange of ideas without which genuine popular democracy is unthinkable?

Blanket censorship

Upon his seizure of absolute power, Marcos issued a Letter of Instruction No. 1 which ordered the Press Secretary and the Secretary of the Department of National Defence (DND) 'to take over and control . . . all newspapers, magazines, radio and television facilities and all other media of communications, wherever they are', so as to prevent their use for propaganda purposes which would tend 'to undermine the faith and confidence of the people in our government and aggravate the present national emergency'. Dated on the same day, 22 September 1972, Marcos drew up a Letter of Authority No. 1, in accordance with Proclamation No. 1081 imposing martial law. This commanded the Press Secretary and the DND Secretary to allow the operation of the Marcos-controlled media, namely: 'Radio Philippines Network, Kanlaon Broadcasting System (KBS), the Voice of the Philippines, Philippines Broadcasting System, and the *Daily Express*.' Meanwhile, Marcos decreed that 'pending the existence of the threat of subversion, communist or otherwise, the operation of all newspapers, magazines, radio and television networks shall remain suspended'.

When Primitivo Mijares, a close Marcos adviser and former chief of the government Media Advisory Council (MAC) censorship body, defected and then testified to the US Congress on 15 June, 1975, he disclosed that it was his signature as MAC chairman that authorised Roberto Benedicto, Marcos' number one front man, now ambassador

to Japan, to requisition the media network of the Lopez family on 7 June, 1973, so that the Marcos-owned KBS, which had conveniently burned on 6 June, could 'discharge its public duty' covering major national news events. (This testimony is now part of the US Congressional Records.) Up to the present, KBS uses the Lopez's ABS-CBN radio-television network for free. The President of the Chronicle Broadcasting Network and publisher of the *Manila Chronicle*, Eugenio Lopez, Jr, was arrested in September 1972 and imprisoned in Fort Bonifacio until his escape in October of last year. He is now in the USA.

Subsequent to Marcos' decrees, the Department of Public Information (DPI) issued Dept. Order No 1 on 25 September, 1972. This order prescribed policies and guidelines for the news media, strictly defining the kind of news reporting demanded by the government. It spelled out the need for 'news reports of positive national value' that would assist the martial law administration. It forbade radio, television and newspapers from carrying 'any editorial opinion, commentary, comments or asides'. It expressly prohibited any material critical of the military or law enforcement agencies, or 'materials that foment opinions and activities contrary to law'.

The direct blanket censorship exercised by the regime is epitomised by item 8: 'In all cases, material for publication and broadcast in the newspapers, radio and television shall be cleared by the Department of Public Information.' This extends to 'all foreign dispatches and cables'. Department Order No 2 stipulated that 'no printer may print any newspaper, periodical, news-sheet, pamphlet, leaflet or publication for mass dissemination of any kind without prior written authority' from the DPI.

On 21 October, 1972, the Secretary of the DPI and the Secretary of the DND set up a Committee on Mass Media which would coordinate the direction and control of all measures to execute Marcos' Letter of Instruction No 1 and subsequent decrees. The Committee was chaired by the DPI Secretary, but in effect its co-chairman, the National Defence Secretary, exercised a larger say since the Executive Director and the Deputy Executive Director of the Committee were the Undersecretary for Home Defence and the Deputy Chief of Staff for Home Defence, respectively (both generals of the army). In the first eight months of martial law,

according to J. Lelyveld of the *New York Times* (20 October, 1973), control of the mass media was assigned to a military-civilian agency called the Mass Media Committee. In practice this Committee was administered by army officers of the Office of Civil Relations, Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP).

Background to the media coup

Observers note that Marcos' strategy in monopolising the channels of information is the patently familiar one of combining closures with take-overs. Marcos had, however, laid the groundwork for further encroachment into the media business, even before this liquidation of his competitors. It began with the Marcos-owned *Daily Express*, a news daily which, at the start of its operations in the late sixties, came out with 40 pages and sold at ten centavos a copy. People in the Greater Manila urban area bought it to read the comic section, solve crossword puzzles, amuse themselves with the inanities of editorialised news reporting, and sell the paper for scrap, thus recovering their original investment. It was evidently a losing proposition. But Marcos, who had already raided the public treasury for over 80 million pesos for his 1969 re-election campaign, was able to squander over five million pesos for the first year alone in order to accomplish his tactical goal of sabotaging the media. With the closure of the media attained under the shadow of bayonets and all competition gone, Marcos reduced the number of pages of the *Daily Express* to 24 and then 20.

Another example is the Marcos-owned Kanlaon Broadcasting System (Channel K-9) which, before 1972, was a second-rate outfit. With the demise of the other TV channels, it increased its advertising rates by 400 per cent after only a month of martial law. Whereas before, TV advertising used to cost only P1,000 per thirty-second commercial, Channel K-9 began to charge P5,000 a few months after September 1972. Today a one-minute commercial costs more than P10,000, depending on the time slot. The situation is compounded by the fact that the Bureau of Internal Revenue Commissioner, Misael Vera, acts as 'advertising manager' for the *Daily Express* and Channel K-9. The tax-collector is thus obliged to please his boss by soliciting for the Marcos media. And the 'penalty' for non-compliance presumably is a benign in-

quiry into one's tax papers.

A few months after the coup, the International Press Institute (IPI) and the Press Foundation of Asia noted that the Marcos crackdown on the mass media 'has no parallel in the whole of Asia'. Representatives of the two organisations concluded after a fact-finding mission in Manila that 4,500 employees of the print media and 3,500 of the broadcast media (with about 25,000 dependants) had lost their jobs. Of the 18 newspapers serving the city, two dailies were left (as mentioned above). The members of the IPI signed a pledge that 'whenever possible, we will remind readers in our countries that The Philippines remains denied of all civil liberties, that its freedom of the press and all forms of expression have been totally suppressed and the leaders of its mass media are in prison without trial. The Philippine mass media, once considered the freest in Asia, have been suppressed to the point of extinction; the most well-known and established among them have no chance of reappearance; and this country of 39 (sic) million people is being fed on only two propaganda bulletins, which are financed and operated by President Marcos' own friends and subordinates.'

The Media Advisory Council

On 11 May, 1973, Marcos established the Media Advisory Council (MAC) with Primitivo Mijares, a columnist on the *Daily Express* and assistant to Marcos, as its chairman. The MAC was supposedly an agency to handle 'the self-regulating mechanism' whereby media people would conform to all decrees and edicts of the Marcos administration. It laid down guidelines which required media establishments to secure Marcos' permission before they could operate.

According to the *New York Times* (20 October, 1973), 'anyone who wants to publish a newspaper, magazine or book in the Philippines now has to sign "an instrument of adherence" promising "wholehearted support" to the Council's guidelines and rules' (45 pages of them). The MAC was also empowered to impose a special levy on all media - 1 per cent of 10 per cent of gross income or total billing (for advertising agencies), eg P1,000 for every P1 million yearly. This of course is in addition to other taxes and fees. The MAC enforced compliance on all newspapers, magazines, comics, radio, TV, public relations and advertising

No magic formula

Marcos is a long, long way down the road on which he set out in 1966 when, promising reform and making the most of his comparative youth, his beautiful wife, and his outstanding war record, he was swept into power as elected President.

Even by his own calculations, it is time to start steering the nation back towards that state of affairs which - with nobody knowing quite what it means - is labelled 'normalcy'.

There is the question of the brutalities associated with the martial law - the arrests, detentions without trial, and the allegations of torture. Then there is the more basic question of its justification and legitimacy.

The President chose the occasion of an international legal conference last month to deliver a defence of his rule and to announce the beginning of the return to 'normalcy'. The actual measures showed his usual style; the left hand taking away what the right hand had given.

The curfew was lifted, but only in 23 provinces. The ban on foreign travel was lifted, but a travel tax imposed. A 'political amnesty' was proposed, but only, it appears, for those detainees who admit guilt first. And Marcos promised local elections by next year.

It has not been a good year for President Marcos. Few people see him as a vicious or stupid man. His regime is not very repressive by Asian standards. Most grant him, mixed with obvious personal ambition, a strong sense of duty to the country.

But martial law has not brought what he promised and what he perhaps genuinely expected to be able to achieve. It has proved to be no magic formula for the solution of existing problems.

Martin Woollacott, *The Guardian*, 10 September 1977

agencies, through its power to issue and cancel licences which were required every six months for any firm to operate.

Among the guidelines that limited press freedom may be cited the following: '... there

A monopoly?

'The new society was established because of anarchy, rebellion, secession, criminal syndicates, and Leftists and Rightists combining to take power by force. We'd reached the point where certain individuals monopolised the human rights belonging to all individuals in the nation.'

President Marcos

should be a limited effort on the part of the mass media to discredit the government'; an article 'shall not be permitted if it in any way provokes discontent or arouses distrust in the government or public authority, or the programs and aims of the Administration.' Chief of the functions performed by the MAC were: to check all advertising copy to be printed and commercials to be broadcast on radio or TV; to review brochures of commercial and industrial firms; to pass films in coordination with the Board of Censors for Motion Pictures; and to check on the media-related activities of public relations units of private firms and of all printing presses. Also, the MAC issues permits to all newsmen, radio and TV announcers prior to employment (*Free Philippines News Service*, 11 July, 1973). Because the MAC suppresses any controversial article submitted to them, no such articles appear in the local newspapers.

One example of the MAC's attempt to glamorise the alleged restoration of a 'responsible' press was its order to all newspapers, radio and TV stations to black out all stories of crimes and epidemics that 'tended to overplay events that create wrong impressions here and abroad'. Not only did the MAC try to discard a report of a bloody encounter between the police and criminals in Manila, but it tried also to suppress the report by the Philippine National Red Cross that six people died of cholera in Camarines Sur in June 1973. Violating these so-called 'Sunshine News Guidelines', a reporter who described the degrading punishment suffered by detainees in the Manila City jail and another who described the hardships of commuters to Manila were both detained and interrogated by the military (*Philippine Times*, 30 June, 1973).

Given its seemingly unlimited powers, the MAC also exercised the function of censoring books and other printed matter from abroad, a job formerly done by the Postmaster General (a retired general). Other offices whose functions have been either infringed upon or absorbed by the MAC were the Philippine Press Institute, the Philippine Press Council, and the Bureau of Media Standards. It also reduced the DPI Secretary to a ceremonial figure. In the process, MAC planned to replace the DPI regional offices as local censor for small publications and radio-TV stations in the provinces.

On 3 October, 1973, the Free Philippines News Service reported that the MAC planned to monopolise the flow of foreign news by establishing a National Media Trust (NMT) modelled after a similar body in Indonesia. (It should be noted here that in the late sixties a CIA-backed body called SUBURI Indonesia - Survey and Business Research, Indonesia - had an affiliate in the Philippines called Asia Research Organisation, Manila.) By declaring the Philippines a franchise area, Marcos could channel all outside news to the local outlets by awarding the sole franchise to the NMT. By being the sole subscriber to all foreign news services, the NMT would be able to select and pre-censor all foreign news to be published or broadcast. The move was, of course, resisted by AP UPI, Reuters and Agence France Press. If established, the NMT would put all these services out of business. Mijares, then MAC head, also contrived to test the viability of a subsidiary agency called Philippine Overseas Information and News Trust (POINT), similar to Indonesia's Antara News Agency, which would assign correspondents to key capitals of the world.

In February 1974, the AP Bureau Chief in Manila, Arnold Zeitlin, was accused of 'malicious, false and/or erroneous reporting' of the Jolo fighting, which resulted in 10,000 Muslim refugees, of the marked increase in criminality, and other incidents. Secretary Carlos Romulo of the Department of Foreign Affairs sent a formal diplomatic note dated 20 February, 1974 to the foreign ministers of Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait (the Philippines is completely dependent on Middle East oil for its energy needs) insinuating that Zeitlin, a 'Jewish journalist', presented a distorted version of the government's genocidal destruction of the Muslim city of Jolo. Zeitlin

denied the accusation and retorted that it had been made because the AP had not recognised the jurisdiction of the MAC. What was really going on behind the scenes? When Mijares testified to the US Congress, he revealed that it was Marcos himself who ordered him, over-ruling his objections, to investigate Zeitlin. When the move backfired, after privately warning Mijares, Marcos disavowed him publicly, saying that the MAC had no jurisdiction over the foreign press.

In November 1974, Marcos abolished the MAC, ostensibly to assuage US critics who charged the regime with totally curtailing the freedom of foreign newsmen. Others suggest that Marcos scrapped the MAC to defuse internal bureaucratic dissension. For example, DPI Secretary Tatad had complained to Marcos and DND Secretary Enrile that Mijares was guilty of unscrupulous practices and the abuse of authority, including extortion and malversation of government funds. He also alleged that Mijares stole the proceeds from the première of *The Godfather* (at P50 per ticket) intended to raise funds for Mrs Marcos' 'Beautification Programme'. (It should be added that Mijares was then also owner of the publishing-advertising firm that handled advertising for the *Daily Express* and published a business-orientated magazine, the *Philippine Monitor*.) In July 1973, numerous complaints were made against the special levy on gross income of mass media being collected by the MAC. Recognising its complete loss of credibility (assuming it had any in the first place), and its potential drawback as an instrument of propaganda, Marcos promptly dissolved it.

The DPI in control

Following the dissolution of the MAC, Marcos announced that its functions had been divided between two bodies: the Print Media Council (PMCP) and the Broadcast Media Council (KBP). Some of the officials connected with these two quasi-government bodies are: Hans Menzi, former presidential aide and publisher of *Bulletin Today*; Teodoro Valencia, a Marcos spokesman and columnist for *Bulletin Today*; Kerima Polotan-Tuvera, biographer of Mrs Marcos and Juan C. Tuvera, a presidential assistant, both of whom manage the *Evening Post*; Leon O. Ty, publisher of *Weekly Examiner* and appointed by Marcos as governor of the Development Bank of the Philip-

No intention

President Marcos has decreed that Wednesday is a 'special holiday' for all Filipinos to pause and give thanks for five years of martial law, practised here under the labels of 'the new society' and 'constitutional authoritarianism'.

Unknown to most of the archipelago's 43 million people, the regime marked the occasion by arresting 28 students, professors, factory workers, and slum community leaders for planning an anti-martial law demonstration.

According to a witness, the 28 were taken to Camp Crame, in suburban Manila, for interrogation by the Metrocom intelligence and security group. Foreign allegations that this organisation tortured other detainees has caused Mr Marcos great embarrassment.

For a few weeks, President Marcos seemed to be relaxing some of the restraints he imposed after seizing dictatorial control of the republic on 21 September 1972. Students have been allowed to protest on their campuses and some illegal strikes have been tolerated.

But yesterday's arrests indicate that Mr Marcos has no serious intention of loosening his grip sufficiently to allow the Philippines to return to what he terms 'normalcy'.

Lewis Simons, *The Guardian*, 22 September 1977

pines; and representatives from *United Daily News*, a Chinese-English daily owned by a Chinese Kuomintang group. Together with the *Daily Express* and the *Times Journal*, the newspapers mentioned are the officially permitted vehicles of propaganda and government news.

In effect, however, it is the Department of Public Information that has emerged as the sole controlling agency of all mass media in the Philippines today. To consolidate further the control of information and streamline his propaganda machine, Marcos re-organised the DPI with a budget of more than \$17 million. It now coordinates the operations of various offices: the Presidential Information Office, Bureau of Broadcasts, a national news service, and regulatory agencies like

the Bureau of Standards for Mass Media, the Bureau of National and Foreign Information, the Bureau for Research, Evaluation and Special Operations. The DPI directs all government propaganda, using all newspapers and TV-radio stations as channels. It manufactures news, press releases of all government agencies, books, radio and TV programmes, even a long-playing album of Marcos' speeches, and films glorifying the lives of the Marcos family, etc. The DPI has been given the power and authority to process all applications for periodic renewal of licences to operate media establishments, screen those seeking employment, and accredit foreign correspondents. To secure working permits, media people have to obtain security clearance from the military, specifically the AFP Office of Civil Relations.

The DPI closely cooperates with the Philippine Constabulary (PC), the national police force, in censoring all short-wave broadcasts (in particular, the BBC and other Australian stations). The PC in turn uses the local radio for propaganda and also monitors all stations. To counteract guerrilla newspapers, the PC enforces the registration of all duplicating machines.

The DPI also works with the National Media Production Centre which is in charge of the printing and distribution of government propaganda. This Centre, with its vast printing and audio-visual facilities, handles most of the technical and production side of government media. Its counterpart is the radio station *Voice of the Philippines*, also funded by public taxes.

The DPI is also linked with the Board of Censors for Motion Pictures, of which the DPI Secretary Tatad is a member. The three other members are all Marcos supporters, including Undersecretary of Defence for Civil Relations, Carmelo Barbero, who headed the government panel in the recent negotiations with the Moro National Liberation Front in Tripoli, Libya.

In its day-to-day operations, the DPI issues periodic directions to media owners and editors on how to handle news. Outside the metropolitan areas, however, the Philippine Constabulary prohibits correspondents from reporting encounters between government troops and rebel insurgents like the New People's Army or the Muslims. DPI chief Tatad once ordered newspaper editors not to publish reports of crime and violence which may impugn the New Society. Employing the

same over-zealous style, former DPI undersecretary Lorenzo J. Cruz (son of New Society apologist E. Aguilar Cruz of the *Times Journal*), now director of the Bureau of National and Foreign Information, warned editors not to use the expression 'under the New Society' lest they be accused of being 'unconsciously' opposed to the regime. Instead he recommended the use of 'in the New Society'. Cruz's office has recently produced its 'masterpiece', an illustrated comic strip series depicting 'the impressive growth of little Ferdinand . . . into one of the most respected Filipino statesmen'. This comic project forms part of a massive propaganda campaign to inculcate authoritarian ideology through all forms of communication-canned TV programmes, trained choruses praising the 'New Society' in songs performed in business offices and plants; two to five minute blurbs for Marcos on radio and TV, and a 10-minute film for the cinemas eulogising the accomplishments of martial law.

Cruz's concern for semantic nuance, however, does not extend to the vulgar hero-worship and circus antics of various 'Information Brigades' dispatched by the regime to the US, headed by opportunists like Luis Taruc, Amelito Mutuc, and assorted film actors and vaudeville stars. The dictatorship even hired the services of Gina Lollobrigida (paid \$500,000, plus other expenses) to show a propaganda film and prepare a photo-album for the delegates to the International Monetary Fund/World Bank meeting in Manila last year.

The apologists

In 1972, charged with directly or indirectly fomenting subversion and a 'Communist conspiracy', the privately owned media were sequestered and padlocked, with Marcos justifying the confiscations and repression as pre-requisites for necessary social change. This is also the political line adopted by apologists like O. D. Corpuz, president of the University of the Philippines. Corpuz stated that freedom of expression is limited by the government prohibition 'against expressing any support for subversion' (*Philippine Times*, 15 May, 1974). In plain words, any fundamental inquiry into the rationale of martial law is outlawed. This is echoed by Jaime Flores, director for planning of the DPI, who warned the participants in an ASEAN training programme in mass communica-

tions of the danger that the mass media might raise 'the demon of social tension and collective anxiety' (*The Carillon*, 25 February, 1974).

Another rationalisation is voiced by a Marcos spokesman, Juan Gatbonton, editor of the magazine *Orientations* and columnist for the Marcos paper *The Filipino Reporter* (distributed from New York City). Gatbonton believes that economic development and civil liberties cannot co-exist, that they are incompatible. Discarding the Enlightenment concept of freedom of speech as not applicable to the Philippines (a trend of apologetics popular among media people in Manila), Gatbonton would substitute the concept of 'development journalism' inspired by 'advocates of the positive state' like Professor Samuel Huntington of Harvard University. The press should be, according to Gatbonton, 'a self-conscious agent for social modernisation'. Naturally this modernisation would be determined by the Marcos clique and defined by the local ruling classes.

On the other hand, a liberal intellectual like Salvador P. Lopez, former ambassador to the United Nations, would dismiss the censorship as a temporary expedient, demanding instead 'self-restraint and self-control' in the press and extolling the British system of information in contrast to the 'licentious and irresponsible media' of pre-martial law days.

Criticism of censorship

Right from the beginning there were counter reactions against the Marcos blitzkrieg. Disgusted by Gatbonton's evasive pedantry and Lopez's self-serving metaphysics, the editor of the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, Derek Davies, resigned from the Board of Trustees of the Press Foundation of Asia (PFA) whose headquarters is in Manila. One of the most damning indictments came from the 22nd General Assembly of the International Press Institute (IPI) which passed a resolution in Jerusalem on 13 June, 1973 stating 'categorically that a free press does not now exist in the Philippines'. It not only deplored the silencing of the press, it also protested against the Marcos regime's denial of the right to work of Filipino journalists who had been conditionally released from prison. At the conference, the former editor of the Manila daily *Chinese Commercial News*, Quintin Yuyitung, whom Marcos deported to Taiwan, had earlier criticised the martial law regime for 'its

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La Difficulté d'Informer

by Jean-Paul Pigasse

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by F. Archambault and J. F. Lemoine

Le Journal dès l'Ecole

by Daniel Morgaine

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suppression of the right of the people to think'.

To refute the contention of Marcos apologists like J. V. Cruz, Leon Maria Guerrero, Adrian Cristobal, and others that the local press enjoys all the rights guaranteed in the old and new Constitution, the Chicago-based *Philippine Times* (31 March, 1974) detailed some cases of banning: 'No less than nine issues of *Time* magazine have been banned in the 13-month period between January 1973 and February 1974.' Among the issues banned were: the 20 January, 1973 issue, which carried a critical article on the Marcos referendum entitled 'Farewell to Democracy'; both newsstand and subscription copies were confiscated. The 12 February, 1973 issue; no reason was given to *Time* officials, but this issue included a story on Marcos' 'power grab', an analysis of the rigging of a plebiscite vote. The 7 May, 1973 issue which carried the cover story 'The Remarkable Renaissance of Karl Marx' considered subversive. The 10 September, 1973 issue which carried an article entitled 'Aquino Re-Writes the Script'. The article reported the abortive attempt

by the martial law government to bring opposition leader Senator Benigno Aquino Jr before a military tribunal. This partial listing does not include issues of the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, *The Economist*, *Newsweek*, and other publications also prohibited from going on sale. If compiled from 1972 to the present, the catalogue would be enormous.

In a letter entitled 'A Plea for Press Freedom' dated 25 October, 1973 (reported in the *Honolulu Star Bulletin*, 9 November, 1973, and the *Philippine Times*, November 1973) Pastor Cirilo Rigos of the Cosmopolitan Church, Bishop Enrique Sobrepeña of the Philippine Independent Church, Fr Pacifico Ortiz of the Jesuit Order, and supervisors of seventy-six other Catholic orders, deplored the 'Self-defeating' system of a manacled press. They noted that the government-managed media specialised in 'slavish praise and endless sycophancy', ignoring or emphasising by their deliberate omission the contradiction between official propaganda and actual fact - 'the reality of misery and poverty for many, high class extravagance and stench of corruption of the few', the prevalent 'terrible injustice' all around. The religious leaders candidly asserted: 'News is being managed, the truth is either suppressed or tortured, public opinion is being manipulated every day, and the whole nation suffers in the process . . . Only those who are in the premises of special privilege can own and operate the various mass media since the authority to publish news or comment must first be obtained from the Media Advisory Council...' The group concluded that 'the cause of moral resurgence begins with the restoration of the freedom of our people to know the truth, specifically through the freedom of the press'.

In April 1974, the American Committee of the IPI castigated 'the censorship, jailing of journalists, forced closure of newspapers and direct government influence on news content and reporting in countries such as Indonesia, the Philippines' and elsewhere. At a board meeting of the IPI in Switzerland on 13 May, 1975, after hearing both sides, the IPI finally expelled the Philippine Committee headed by Teodoro Valencia. A Filipino exile, Attorney J. G. Quijano, former legal counsel of the *Philippine Free Press* and the *Chinese Commercial News*, lobbied against the Marcos representative, quoting in his remarks a foreign newsman's observation that the Philip-

pine press 'is so scandalously servile that the only possible source of reliable domestic news is the classified ads'. This expulsion was already anticipated in the IPI 1974 year-end review of world media, which underlined the fact that the Philippine press 'lacks credibility; it is servile and merely abets rumour'.

Besieged by the heavy barrage of condemnation from the world press and beleaguered by the intense legal and propaganda battles of local Filipino organisations, especially from the religious sector, Marcos has signed a still unnumbered decree (among many still undisclosed) increasing the penalty 'for acts which incite or tend to incite the rebellion or sedition or undermine the faith of the people in the government and duly constituted authorities'. The decree specifically penalises 'authors of rebellious or seditious literature, published with their knowledge, in any form; the editors publishing such literature and the owners/operators of the establishment selling the same' (*Daily Express*, 26 July, 1976). Under this decree, the chief of the Philippine Constabulary, with the approval of the Secretary of National Defence, who has the final decision on all appeals cases, has been assigned to formulate rules and regulations to implement the decree.

An underground press

One writer for the underground magazine *Dare to Struggle Dare to Win* (March 1973), Daniel Tempora, commented that under martial law the function of the media has ceased to be educational or critical and has become totally manipulative. Art and literature likewise have been harnessed to promote feudal, reactionary ideas and values. On the whole, New Society propaganda uses mystifying rhetoric and obscurantist techniques to cultivate passivity, obedience and submission cloaked in such banal euphemisms as 'responsibility', 'peace and order', and hackneyed slogans like 'You are the New Filipino' and 'Dignity for All through National Discipline'. It seeks to evoke credibility by appealing to the irrational, indulging in the same breath a narrow-minded 'anti-Western' provincialism designed to conceal Marcos's subservience to US and other foreign business interests.

In the face of the mendacity and opportunism pervading the mass media today, the Filipino people are seizing the opportunity to found a

people's press dedicated to serving the majority of the population, 90 per cent of whom consist of impoverished peasants and workers. Resisting the thought-control administered by the regime, they have mobilised their forces to create their own organs of communication. Numerous papers have sprung up in communities, schools, offices, factories, farms, and elsewhere in bold defiance of the regime. DND Secretary Enrile admitted in January 1973 that 75 clandestine newspapers, 35 of which are published regularly, are widely disseminated throughout the islands. Chief of them are *Liberation* and *Taliba ng Bayan* (People's Vanguard). To advance this front of the struggle, elements associated with the National Democratic Front, the umbrella coalition of all anti-fascist and anti-martial law forces in the Philippines, have formed the *Free Philippines News Service*, a news-gathering and news-disseminating agency inaugurated in April 1973. That year, the editor of the *Bangkok Post* observed how the 'flourishing underground press' testifies to the Filipino people's rejection of the censored dailies that feed the public with dull exhortations, adulatory editorials and distorted reports. Besides these mimeographed papers, pamphlets, posters, secret discussion groups and propaganda by word of mouth help spread the word and arouse critical consciousness.

At this juncture, the urgent challenge articulated in 1976 by militant Jesuit Bishop Francisco Claver, one of the 155 church and lay figures reported to have been arrested in February 1977, holds out a prospect of the restoration of press freedom in the Philippines: 'If we believe an enlightened public opinion to be basic to the humane conduct of society, how do we, under the heavy strictures imposed by the present system of governance, create it? How do we counteract the deleterious effects of its almost total absence? Even more fundamentally, how do we create the instrumentalities of its formation? The obstacles - the shadow of the gun, the ever present threat of the stockade and all that it so far has meant, our own fears, imagined and real - these are formidable obstacles. But yet they are not by any means insurmountable.'



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