

ANONG BALITA? Notes On The History of Philippine Journalism 1811-1898*

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Introduction

The media have always been a part of society and its growth. One of its elements that had an important role in Spanish-colonial Philippines was the newspaper. It played an essential part in the dissemination of information especially in business, social life, and, later, propaganda in a time of revolution.

Since Valenzuela's *History of Journalism in The Philippine Islands*¹ in 1933, there has been no published history of Philippine journalism. The histories that had been written are based on secondary sources, focused on certain episodes in journalism history; and, mostly, chapters or parts of a journalism manual. The earlier ones are either bibliographic listings of newspapers and magazines or sections of the history of printing in the Philippines.

This paper is the result of some notes gathered during an initial research on the story of Philippine journalism from the Spanish colonial period until today. The presentation is focused on some insights into the Philippine press during the Spanish period. It studied the newspaper not as a bibliographical tool but as part of Philippine colonial development during the last century of Spanish rule.

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¹ Jesus Z. Valenzuela. *History of Journalism in the Philippine Islands*. (Manila: The Author, 1933). In writing his book, Valenzuela had the advantage of examining first-hand many of the Spanish and early-American period newspapers at the National Library and other university libraries and private collections before the Second World War. Pictures of the pre-war NL collection can be seen in the July-December, 1911 editions of *Renacimiento Filipino*.

News Instincts

Communication played an important part in the colonization of the islands. The Spanish government always relied on reports written by their officials and missionaries of the different religious orders brought in through messenger and boats in the islands. The galleons and, later, the merchant ships from Europe brought news from abroad. If necessary, these reports were printed and disseminated to the public. The published newsletters or “newsbooks” were similar to the ones done in Europe in the 17th century. These sheets usually report or announce a singular event like a battle or a royal celebration.

The newssheets in the Philippines were captioned as *Avisos al Publico* and called *hojas volantes*, literally, “flying sheets”, probably because these were distributed and expected to be immediately passed from hand to hand in the city.

Artigas y Cuerva says that this “first show of journalism (*sintomas del periodismo*)” was shown in 27 February 1779 and mentioned the news of a victorious battle against Muslim raiders in Kawit, Cavite and the Camarines.²

Valenzuela described the *Aviso* as “printed on rice paper of about the size of a large notebook and folded so as to make four pages.”³ It was also “printed on only one side of the sheet, the other side being blank.”⁴ He also adds:

Its information was confined to one single (*sic*) incident. It had neither serial number nor print, and the pages were not numbered...

Valenzuela also explained the *Aviso* as a source in the history of Philippine journalism:

Journalism, as it is understood today, appears to assign this sheet under the classification of broadsides, handbills, or *pasquins*.⁵

² Manuel Artigas y Cuerva. “*El Centenario de la Imprenta, 1593-1602-1911*” in *Renacimiento Filipino II*: 50 (14 July 1911), 41. Although this series was published in celebration of the centennial of printing in the Philippines, Artigas only concentrated on the history of local newspapers from the Spanish until the early American period.

³ Valenzuela, 13.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁵ *Ibid.*

It is this statement that we will use in our later observations regarding the first newspaper in the country.

The First Newspaper

The appearance of the first newspaper in the Philippines was a result of the Spanish colonists' need of news from Europe. As Medina writes:

We shall witness, that in the Philippines, the birth of the first newspaper is not due to the requirements of commerce, nor to the literary or scientific spirit, and much less to the ideas of independence. It is unquestionably due to the eagerness of the populace to catch at least a glimpse of what is happening in the Peninsula during the critical period it was facing with the French invasion, when there was in the colony an absolute lack of communication with the motherland.⁶

The first newspaper in the country was *Del Superior Gobierno*.⁷

The initial issues that came out on 8 August 1811 didn't have a masthead. It only had a handwritten notation of the number and the date.

It was claimed that a newsletter entitled "Succesos Felices" (1637)⁸

⁶ Jose Toribio Medina. "The First Newspaper of the Philippines" in Wenceslao G. Retana. *El Periodismo Filipino, 1811-1894*. (Madrid: Minuesa de los Rios, 1895). Translated by Rodolfo L. Nazareno and Maria Elena Peña (Manila: PPI, 1991), 168. Retana published two versions of *El Periodismo Filipino*. The first one was a book in 1895 while the other was in 1906 as a chapter in the third volume of his bibliographical work *Aparato bibliografico de la historia general de Filipinas*. The latter compilation does not include the Medina article. The author will only use the Aparato chapter for the newspaper descriptions in this paper. See *Aparato bibliografico de la historia general de Filipinas Volumen 3*. (Madrid: Sucesora de Minuesa de Rios, 1906), 1493-1800.

⁷ A copy of the first issue of *Del Superior Gobierno* can be found in the National Library. See Entry No. 139 in Isagani R. Medina. *Filipiniana Materials in the National Library* (Manila: National Library, 1972), 18. This specimen has been restored and bound with the rest of the issues numbering II to VII. It measures 27.5 cm x 17.5 cm with 15 pages.

Last year, the author accidentally discovered a copy of the first issue in the Archivo de Universidad de Santo Tomas (AUST) during his dissertation research. It has been mistakenly labeled "*Communicaciones del Gobierno sobre asuntos de Interes general de España y de las Islas...*" in the archives catalog by Gregorio Arnaiz, O.P. and as "*Communicaciones oficiales entre el Gobierno y la sobre interes generales de las Islas, 1881*" in the folio cover. This specimen measures 27 cms x 19.5 cms with 15 pages and one blank page at the end. It is in a very brittle condition. See AUST Folletos 85, Folios 342-350.

⁸ *Succesos Felices...* (colophon) Con Licencia en Manila, por Tomas Pimpin Impressor, Año 1637. This was reprinted in Madrid in 1639 and reproduced by Retana in his *Archivo del bibliófilo filipino* (Madrid: Vda. de Minuesa de los Rios, 1889-1905) Tomo IV, 113-136. A translation is in Emma Blair and James A. Robertson. *The Philippine Islands, 1493-1898*. (Cleveland, Ohio: Arthur H. Clark,

printed by Tomas Pinpin in the Jesuit press⁹, was the first newspaper in the Philippines. This claim, however, is doubtful.¹⁰ *Succesos* was similar to the *Avisos* published by Spanish officials. A modern definition of a newspaper is defined as “a publication issued at regular and usually close intervals, esp. daily or weekly, and commonly containing news, comments, features and advertising.”¹¹ In its infant stages, a newspaper consisted of local news with a sprinkling of foreign news for business and public interest. This was not the case with the *Succesos*.

Governor-General Manuel Fernandez de Folgueras served as the editor of *Del Superior*. The first number contained news items from Calcutta, a letter from London; some news from the Spanish Cortes; letters of two representatives from Spain and England about the diplomatic relations of their countries; and a dispatch from Lord Wellington to Count Liverpool dated September 30, 1810 about the battle of Bussaco. We are certain of the news sources for Folgueras himself writes that “the inhabitants of the Philippines... should also hear of the good news in the English gazettes received from Bengal.”¹² These news items were quickly translated, printed, and immediately disseminated.

Del Superior Gobierno was infrequently published by the government. It, however, surprisingly lasted for two years with the last issue (February 7) coming out in 1813.

Co., 1903-1909) Volume XXIX, 116-134. A copy here in the Philippines is found in the Lopez Memorial Museum.

⁹ Villadolid mistakenly assumed that *Succesos Felices* was done in the Dominican press as it was commonly known that Pinpin began his career there. But, based on evidence of the books that he worked on for the different religious orders, it seemed Pinpin hired out his printing services. One of these presses was the one owned by the Jesuits. See Alice C. Villadolid. *Featuring... The Philippine Press: 1637 to 2005*. (Q.C.: Art Angel, n.d.), 11-12.

¹⁰ The veracity of *Succesos* being a newspaper or even the first periodical published in the Philippines was doubted by the author when he noticed that bibliographers listed it as a rare book. Retana, in fact, does not include it in his *El Periodismo Filipino*. Artigas y Cuerva does not mention it at all in his “*El Centenario de la Imprenta*.” Also, in spite of its existence in the Philippines before World War II, Valenzuela does not mention the *Succesos* in his journalism history. Mauro Garcia says that the *Succesos* is “generally considered the first newspaper in the Philippines.” He, however, continuously referred to it as a “book” in his bibliographical description and even says that it “partakes the nature of a newspaper issued to disseminate information...” See Mauro Garcia. *Philippine Rariora: A Descriptive Catalog of 17th Century Imprints in the Lopez Memorial Museum*. (Pasig: Eugenio Lopez Foundation, 1983), 27.

The World of *Del Superior Gobierno*

The Europe reported in the first issue of *Del Superior Gobierno* was a continent in turmoil. The Napoleonic Empire was in its waning years but the spirit of conquest was still in the mind of Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte. France was at war with England and the latter was becoming an isolated country as Continental Europe fell under the power of the Bonapartes.

In 1809, Napoleon decided to conquer Spain. By March, Madrid was taken. But the Spanish reaction was unexpected. The populace revolted and forced their king, Charles IV to abdicate in favor of his son, Ferdinand. But Napoleon had other ideas in mind for his new territory. Both Charles and Ferdinand were forced to renounce their claim to the throne and the Emperor installed his brother, Joseph, as King of Spain.

But the nation that conquered and colonized lands in the East wasn't prepared to become a conquered country and a colony themselves. The Spanish Army fought hard but lost to the well-disciplined and better-armed French Grand Armée. The defeat led to a more gruesome affair for both countries. Guerilla warfare was initiated by the Spaniards and the French Army vented their ire on the civilian populace. The Spain of that era of French occupation was the Spain portrayed by Francisco Goya in his series of sketches and paintings depicting French cruelties against the Spanish populace between 1808 and 1813. One of these works was the painting, *Third of May, 1808*, that depicts the execution of civilians by the French Army.

But Napoleon's ambition for new territory became one of his imperial management problems. By 1810, the Spanish resistance was leaving Joseph Bonaparte pining for his old kingdom in Italy. The War of Independence or, what the British called, the Peninsular War, had Napoleon himself calling the peninsula his "Spanish ulcer."¹³

The turmoil in Spain led to major changes in its government. The South American colonies began revolting to free themselves from colonial rule. King Ferdinand VII was exiled under French guard in France. A Cortes was quickly called by the Regency (the revolutionary rulers of Spain) to remedy the situation. The new parliament was dominated by liberals who

¹¹

Stuart Berg Flexner (ed.) *The Random House Dictionary of the English Language* 2nd ed.

had in mind not to just support the defense of the motherland but to reform its government.

In 1812, the Spanish Cortes promulgated its first liberal constitution in Cadiz (where the government established itself since Madrid was still occupied) that placed sovereignty in the hands of the people and not in their king.

As Durant wrote:

It accepted the Spanish monarch, and acknowledged the absent Ferdinand VII as the rightful king; however, it placed the sovereignty not in the king but in the nation acting through its elected delegates. The king was to be a constitutional ruler, obeying the laws; and adding to them, and making treaties, only in conjunction with the national Cortes.¹⁴

But, two years later, France surrendered before a combined army of British soldiers led by the Duke of Wellington and Spanish guerillas. Napoleon abdicated. Ferdinand VII returned and restored his reign. With his return came the absolutism that characterized monarchist thought and governance.¹⁵

The 19th Century Press

The events in Europe greatly affected the lives of the Spaniards in the Philippines. The independence of South America from Spanish colonial rule ended the more than 200-year old galleon trade enterprise between Spain and the Philippines. In 1820, the colony was opened to free trade and soon foreign merchants were investing in Philippine products to be shipped abroad.

¹² Unabridged. (New York: Random House, 1987.), 1295.

¹³ *Del Superior Gobierno I*: I (8 August 1811), 1.

¹⁴ Tony Allan (ed). *The Pulse of Empire, AD 1800-1850*. (Amsterdam: Time-Life, 1996), 33.

¹⁵ Will and Ariel Durant. *The Story of Civilization: The Age of Napoleon*. Volume 11. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1975), 540.

The early newspapers focused on events in Spain with a sprinkling of opinions by local officials and prominent citizens. Political opinions were freely expressed and published. Many of these early newspapers were privately-owned and each had its own statement on the upheavals in Spain. There were also accounts of local happenings. “Coverage” was through the receipt of letters and announcements from officials and the religious. The *Noticias Sacadas* (1813), citing a letter from “a priest in one part of Albay” reported a series of Muslim raids in Leyte, Masbate, and Iloilo.¹⁶

But business in the colony also mattered a lot with the press. The earliest known regular business newspaper was the *Registro Mercantil de Manila* (1824) published by the *Sociedad Economica de Amigo del Pais*. The society had been revived after some years of being inactive and, this time, fulfilled its actual duties as an agricultural and business entity.¹⁷ This periodical came out monthly. It had government permission to be printed and had a staff of qualified editors. The newspaper, in fact, was continuously printed in spite of financial problems, as Retana says:

The zeal of the Society in sustaining this newspaper of interest to the merchant class even when expenses exceeded receipts, is very praiseworthy. It was only when its funds no longer can sustain it was its cancellation agreed upon.¹⁸

Registro Mercantil lasted for ten years with the final issue coming out in May, 1833.

It was in the middle of the 19th century that the commercial media bloomed. With the Philippines entering world trade, the colonists and foreign merchant houses became concerned with the international situation. Much of their fortunes were dependent on the conditions of the continent. With a population hungry for information, businessmen began to put up their own printing presses brought in from Europe and America.

¹⁵ For a good reference on the history of 19th century Spain, see Raymond Carr. *Spain: 1808-1975*. (New York: Oxford, 1989).

¹⁶ Retana. “*El Periodismo Filipino*”, 1494.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 1508. The *Sociedad* was inaugurated in 1781 in Manila and was tasked as a “center of research, a clearing house of development projects, a patron of the arts, a stimulus of agriculture and a repository of scientific discoveries.” It was abolished in 1809 and revived in 1821. In 1823, it

At first, newspapers appeared only weekly owing to the fact that news from abroad (which was the concern of many subscribers) had to be awaited before enough can be gathered to fill the pages of the periodical. But the newly-established businessmen/publishers found other topics to write about and print. Aside from news, articles on religion, artistic and literary subjects, social and cultural; as well as the economy began to appear. The first daily newspaper, *La Esperanza* (1846), had various sections for religion, science, and art. Soon the presses were rolling steadily and newspapers began to compete with each other in sales and popularity.

In his description of the *Diario de Manila*¹⁹, Robert MacMicking narrates the importance of the newspaper to the colonial business world:

A well-conducted periodical of this nature is of great importance in a commercial point of view, not only from the advertisements circulated by its means throughout the Philippines, but from the variety of facts and information which the country alcaldes address to the Manilla Government in which they are required to give a list of the prices-current for the various articles of produce grown in their different provinces; a regulation which, of course, tends to keep the trade on a sound footing, and to prevent reckless speculation, which the want of market information usually induces.²⁰

revised its statutes but eventually declined. For a history of the organization, see Jose Montero y Vidal. *Historia general de Filipinas*. (Madrid: Viuda y Hijos de Tello, 1894), 291-294

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ The *Diario de Manila* was the most popular newspaper during the Spanish period. It began in 1848 and had the longest running circulation in the Philippines. It briefly had to close down to give way for the publication of the *Boletin oficial de Filipinas* in 1852. But when the latter folded in 1860, the Diario resumed publication and became recognized as the best edited newspaper in the country. The newspaper was later accused of inciting the Filipinos to revolt by publishing "seditious articles." It

The *Diario*, in fact, was said to be the most popular daily in the country in the mid-19th century. Its owner was aware of the opportunities the newspaper was bringing in that an efficient delivery service was worked out for its subscribers, “who paid one dollar a month for their daily dose of news.”²¹

The *Diario* is delivered at the houses of Manilla subscribers at about daylight every morning so that they may make themselves masters of its contents while sipping their chocolate before engaging in the business of the day.²²

It must be noted that the newspaper business was becoming a lucrative enterprise for writers and printers. For example, the *Diario* and the bi-monthly *Ilustracion Filipina* (1859) were printed by the *Imprenta y Litografia de Ramirez y Giraudier*.²³ Both business partners, Manuel Ramirez and Baltazar Giraudier, were, at the same time, directors of the *Diario*.²⁴ Journalist and editor, Jose Felipe del Pan, on the other hand, wrote for both newspapers at one time. .²⁵ He would eventually manage another newspaper, *La Oceania Espanola* in 1877.²⁶ Ramirez y Giraudier were also contracted for a time by the government to publish the official gazetter, *Gaceta de Manila* (1861).²⁷

But the economic conditions also brought in new philosophies and ideas that fostered the political transitions in Spain. The tumultuous changes from a monarchy to a constitutional/parliamentary democracy then back again to a monarchy had an effect in the Philippine press. The government, aware of the role newspapers and books can play with these transitions, enforced censorship.

was closed down in 1898, revived for a few months, then eventually ended its career in 1899. See Retana, 1518-1519; 1533-1537.

²⁰ Robert MacMicking. *Recollections of Manilla and The Philippines During 1848, 1849, and 1850.* (Manila: Filipiniana Book Guild, 1967). 128.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Retana, *op.cit.*, 1522.

The Comision de Censura

According to Retana, the government censorship policy lasted until the beginning of the American period. History shows that the only period of what we can term as a “free press” happened between 1817 and 1821 with the rise of a parliamentary constitutionality in the second restoration of the Cadiz Constitution.²⁸

When the liberal constitution was again abolished in 1823, censorship resumed. In 1824, Governor-General Juan Antonio Martinez announced “the end of freedom of the press and the beginning of new censorship policies.”

In 1856, Governor-General Ramon Montero issued a decree creating the *Comision permanente de censura*. It was composed of 11 members consisting of

1. the Fiscal of the Audiencia;
2. its president;
3. four “secular voices” to be named by the Governor-General
4. four priest to be appointed by the Archbishop of Manila;
5. a secretary who has no voting powers.²⁹

In 1857, the decree listing the set of rules and regulations of the censors was issued. It had 51 articles with six titles that covered all publishable works like books covering business, general topics, and those “with particular use”; and, newspapers. It also covered banners and objects “with paintings and printed pictures, as well as plays.³⁰

The section involving newspapers covered 16 articles. It details the duties of the newspaper publishers and editor; censors; the articles prohibited to be published; as well as the penalties.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 1533.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 1534.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 1568-1571.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 1540.

²⁸ Ferdinand VII abolished the Cadiz Constitution upon his resumption as King of Spain in 1814. Due to pressure from the liberals, he recognized the constitution in 1820 only to abolish it again later. See Carr, 119.

Article 13 states that “for a newspaper to be established in the Islands, a license must be secured from the government.”³¹ The process of censorship was simple: the publisher or editor is required to “present in advance the page proofs to have it censored.”³² The censors³³ will then “make the modifications in ample time, save the final proofs, sign it, then return it to the editor.”³⁴

The prohibited articles are the following:

1. those that expressed maxims and doctrines conspiring to destroy or change the Catholic religion and its cults or dogmas; the decess and prerogatives of the throne; and, the fundamental monarchial laws;
2. those that disturb the public peace;
3. those that deliberately or evidently initiate action against the legitimate authority;
4. licentious writings or those contrary to good customs;
5. those injurious or libelous to the reputations or private conduct of individuals;
6. those injurious to a foreign Sovereign or to their government...³⁵

Penalties for violation of censorship laws are stated in Article 20. For not conforming to the manuscript as corrected by the censor, the publisher, editor, or printer is to pay “50 pesos for the first offense 100 pesos for the second, and 200 pesos for the third.” A penalty of 500 pesos is to be added to the value of each newspaper sold with an article or articles that was prohibited by the censors. The appearance of any suggestion in the newspaper that an article has been censored - like a blank area in a column or news item - entails a penalty of 100 pesos for the first offense, 200 for the second, and, if the offense is committed a third time, the closing down of the newspaper.³⁶

²⁹ Wenceslao G. Retana. *La Censura de Imprenta de Filipinas*. (Madrid: Victoriano Suarez, 1908),

³⁰ 3.

³⁰ *Reglamento de Asuntos de la Imprenta decretado por Excmo. Sr. Gobernador Político Superior de las Islas en 16 de Febrero de 1857*. (Manila: Establecimiento de tipografico de Santo Tomas, 1857) in Wenceslao G. Retana. *Archivo del bibliofilo filipino*. Tomo 1 (Madrid: Viuda de Minuesa de los Ríos, 1895), 297-322.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 11.

Retana pointed out various cases when the *Comision* acted on requests to put up printing presses or establish newspapers. Grounds for censorship were often selective and arbitrary.

For example, in 1868, Joaquin Loyzaga was given permission to publish a “*Diario de avisos*” and an “*Hoja volante*.³⁷ A year later, he was given a permit to change the name “*Diario de avisos*” to “*El Comercio*.³⁸ That same year, he was denied permission to publish a bi-weekly newspaper in Chinese entitled “*Hojas de anuncios y noticias mercantiles*” as, in the commission’s view “there was no reason for its necessity as there are three or four newspapers which handle mercantile cases.”³⁹

In 1872, the commission denied requests from D. Juan P. Gutierrez Gay, a private businessman, to put up a printing press in Cebu after “the delicate case” was referred to the Archbishop. The previous year, a request by Gay to publish a newspaper in Iloilo entitled “*La Prensa de Iloilo*” was turned down by the *Comision* as “there was no necessity to put up such a publication.”⁴⁰

It was through this government office that the Spanish era media was repressed. The law was simple, the penalties immediately enforced if broken. Permissions asked for publication or the putting up of presses was investigated first before permission is either granted or denied. The problem was, as the proverbial saying goes, nipped in the bud before it started. Those works that have been published are merely pulled out of circulation or the printing press shut down.

In a way, the censorship policy was understandable. The unstable political climate in Spain and the loss of its South America only lent an air of paranoia to the colonial authorities. And, with the Philippines thousands of miles away from Spain, but now easily accessible through modern technological communication and transportation, it might not be long before its local inhabitants would be clamoring for independence.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Article 15 states that “one or two censors from the *Comision*” are assigned for each newspaper.” *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 14.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 13-14.

The Clandestine Press

Native sentiments through the press became popular with the publication of newspapers managed by Filipinos like *El Pasig* (1862); *Diariong Tagalog* (1882); and, *El Eco de Vigan* (1884). *El Resumen*, published by Pascual Poblete, was said to have “nationalistic tendencies.” Its targeted readership was obvious as Retana noted that “it was the cheapest of the dailies which saw light in the Archipelago.⁴¹ A subscription costs two pesos while an issue costs four *cuartos*.

Near the end of the 19th century, Filipino resorted to newspapers to spread their newfound principles. The Propaganda Movement in Spain published the *La Solidaridad* in Madrid. The founding of the Katipunan in 1892 saw the appearance of the clandestine press in Manila.

With a second-hand press brought from funds donated by Francisco del Castillo and Candido Iban and operated with types stolen from the *Diario de Manila* printing press in Intramuros, the first issue of *Kalayaan* appeared in 1896.⁴² The newspaper was purely a propaganda piece with writings by its editor, Emilio Jacinto, and Katipunan leader Andres Bonifacio extolling the virtues of independence and national identity. To elude the censors and to avoid arrest, the masthead stated that the newspaper was printed in Yokohama, Japan and its editor was Marcelo del Pilar.⁴³

The *Kalayaan* press was moved from place to place around the city and finally ended up hidden in the house of Alejandro Santiago at 712 Clavel St. in Binondo. The discovery of the Katipunan forced the printers to destroy it along with copies of the second issue of *Kalayaan*.

Retana says that “not one newspaper was founded”⁴⁴ in 1897 after the outbreak of the Revolution of 1896 and the Pact of Biak na Bato a year

³⁷ Retana. *La Censura*, 14.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 21.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 24. The Spanish authorities may have been edgy about putting up a newspaper in this area. Both Cebu and Iloilo were international ports and the center of trade in the Visayas. It could become a seedbed of trouble.

⁴¹ Retana. “*El Periodismo*”, 1667.

⁴² There is no known copy of the *Kalayaan* in existence today. Retana saw a copy of the Katipunan newspaper and published its contents in his *Archivo del bibliófilo filipino Tomo 3* (Madrid: Vda. de Minuesa de los Ríos, 1897), 53. For a history of the *Kalayaan*, see “The Memoirs of Dr. Pio Valenzuela” in *Minutes of the Katipunan*. (Manila: NHI, 1978), 103-107.

later. He, however, mentions the establishment of the *El Heraldo de Iloilo* (1897) which survived through news obtained from telegraph and mail from Manila.

The arrival of the Americans in 1898 brought new conditions of press freedom in Manila. Both the Spaniards and the Filipinos took advantage of this situation. At least 16 newspapers were founded that year alone along with some periodicals printed by the Americans. *The Kon Leche* (1898) became the first Spanish newspaper to be published under American rule⁴⁵ while the Filipinos printed *La Independencia* (1898).⁴⁶

The story of this newspaper is interesting as it showed that, in spite of their newfound freedom, the Philippine press still decided to print clandestinely as if in anticipation of a coming conflict with the Americans. The revolutionary press was then still advocating independence from colonial rule.

Rafael Palma, who was one of its writers and, later, its director, narrates:

The intelligentsia partly with a desire to cooperate wholeheartedly with the new state of things and partly governed by an instinct of self-preservation decided to establish a newspaper which would serve as spokesman for the newly-acquired independence of the country.⁴⁷

La Independencia was formed by a committee led by the Luna brothers, Juan and Antonio. The editorship was initially offered to lawyer, Isaac Fernando Rios who turned it down "with expressions of false modesty."⁴⁸ Antonio Luna decided to publish it using his own money and appointed himself Director. His staff consisted of what Palma called "the literary bulwark of Santo Tomas University" and the Del Rosario brothers, Salvador (who became editor-in-chief) and Mariano, both of whom wrote for the defunct *La Solidaridad*.

⁴³ Retana mentions that Governor-General Ramon Blanco appointed an official, Alfredo Villeta, to send to Japan to investigate if, indeed, the *Kalayaan* was published there. The idea was abandoned, however. Jesus Valenzuela says that "it showed that the activities of the Filipino propagandists were such as to disturb the Administration." See Retana, *Ibid.* and Valenzuela, 96.

But the staff was in for a disappointment. Permission was asked from the Provost Marshall of Manila to put up the newspaper with the name "*La Patria*." The request was denied "on the belief that the newspaper might rekindle the fire of discord between the Filipinos and Spaniards."⁴⁹

Luna, however, decided to continue with the project. He changed the name of the periodical to "*La Independencia*" and, on September 3, 1898, the first issues came out. Since, the newspaper, technically, didn't have permission from the American authorities, Luna had the name of the printing press at the *Asilo de Huerfanos* in Malabon placed on the masthead. In reality, the press was installed in Luna's house along *Calle Jolo* in Binondo. The Americans eventually found out about this but did not interfere with the newspaper's operations.⁵⁰

La Independencia quickly gained public support. Their articles were well-received for it totally advocated independence for the country.

As Palma explains:

The exterior appearance did not differ much from other newspapers, but it certainly differed in content. Everything published therein was original. We had very few reprints, and those were mostly from foreign newspapers which advocated our case. There were many of us and we could have filled eight pages easily but our financial resources was limited.⁵¹

As for the writers, Palma had this to say:

"*La Independencia* attracted the attention of man Spaniards by the refined expression and literary finesse shown by the contributors. It was believed by a few people that most of the news items and feature articles were

⁴⁴ Retana, "*El Periodismo*", 1760. Surprisingly, Retana does not include the *Kalayaan* in his bibliographical listing in spite of the fact that he published a transcription of a copy in his *Archivo*. This meant that the copy he saw wasn't his.

written by Spanish writers or by mestizos who were renegades to their country's cause. The real truth was this: that enthusiastic and pioneering group of Filipino newspapermen, although new in the field, were well-read and highly-cultured.⁵²

But the Filipino-American War soon began. *La Independencia* found itself an anti-American newspaper on the run. Its printing press and office were constantly on the move as province after province fell to the Americans. From a temporary headquarters in San Fernando, Pampanga, the editorial offices moved to Malolos, Bulacan where the staff decided to part ways. Luna resumed his military duty as a Philippine Army general while the rest returned home to their families. Only Palma, Fernando Ma. Guerrero, and Cecilio Apostol were left to manage the newspaper.⁵³ To facilitate an easy escape if Malolos fell, the printing press was placed on board railroad coaches. The train continuously moved north until it arrived at a permanent base in Bautista, Pangasinan. By this time, Palma was Director of the newspaper after Luna was assassinated.⁵⁴

In spite of the retreat from the Americans, the newspaper continuously printed issues. Supporters provided regular communications from Manila and even from the Filipino community in Hongkong. Newsprint was regularly smuggled in from Manila.

But the staff's efforts were coming to an end. Tarlac fell to the Americans. The Army retreated to Pangasinan. Palma and his fellow writers hurriedly dismantled the printing press and buried it near the railroad tracks in Bautista. They then fled back to Camiling, Tarlac where, with "our official seal and a few boxes of types,"⁵⁵ they managed to put out two more issues. Camiling was later occupied and soon *La Independencia* was "forced by circumstances into an inactive existence."⁵⁶

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 1774.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 1761.

⁴⁷ Rafael Palma. *My Autobiography*. (Manila: Capitol Publishing, 1953),, 31.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 31-32.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 34.

It was the end of the Philippine revolutionary press. When Palma and his staff returned to Manila, newspapers were again in business with new ones being put up by pro-American Filipinos.

Henceforth, the Philippine press had entered a new era under a new colonial ruler.

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