

# Communication Media in the Philippines: 1521–1986

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The centennial of the declaration of Philippine independence provides a context within which we examine communication as a critical sector in the nation's history. The journalism profession in particular, played a significant part in the nation's quest for political freedom and independence. Names now etched in the pantheon of national heroes as journalists who waged a spirited campaign in the 1880s for reforms and independence—Jose Rizal, Marcelo H. del Pilar, Graciano Lopez Jaena, Antonio Luna, to name a few. Their works triggered the Philippine Revolution, acknowledged as the first successful challenge by an Asian people against western colonials (Schumacher 1973).

This nationalistic fervor is to be ingrained in the spirit of succeeding Filipino journalists and other communicators as demonstrated in the EDSA "People Power" Revolution of 1986. To a great extent, the politicization of the masses, the discontentment with martial rule and the call for social and political reforms were fired up by the writings of journalists, who, like their noble predecessors, risked their lives for freedom and democracy.

But except for these three significant episodes in the nation's history (1890s, 1930s [Philippine nationalism during the Commonwealth period], and the 1980s) where the mass media played a significant role in the political life of the nation, the sector, for the rest of the coming decades, chose to be primarily an objective chronicler of events, a government watchdog (or propagandist, as experienced

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during the Marcos years) and an entertainment channel. This may be attributed to the libertarian and free enterprise principles institutionalized by the American colonizers.

It was the decade of the seventies, characterized by social upheavals and youth activism (the so-called quarter storms) when communication scholars and practitioners began to question the relevance of western communication (press) theories and models after considerable thinking and reflection. At the global arena, UNESCO provided the forum for debate. UNESCO advocated for a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) with the following as reform agenda: democratization of ownership; balanced and two-way flow of information, pluralism, and strengthening of community communication (media).

In response to these challenges, some scholars offered development communication as an alternative model. Immediately, critics branded this as a form of government propaganda and therefore unacceptable. But with strong commitment from its proponents, the true worth of "devcom" was realized. Since then, communication has been an integral part of the development process in sustainable development, peace process, social reform agriculture, rural development, among others.

During the succeeding decades, media organizations began to craft their codes of ethics—in print, broadcast, cinema and advertising. Professional media associations began to adopt the principle of self-regulation in their exercise of social responsibility and to ensure adherence to professionalism.

The Philippine communication system with its democratic framework presents a unique model in the ASEAN Region. It has always operated on a free enterprise and commercialized system in contrast to the rest of the other countries in the region which are primarily government-owned and controlled. The freedom enjoyed by Philippine media however has become a double-edged sword. The media began to be criticized for being rambunctious and sensational. Media's dependence on advertising developed a consumer society predisposed to western tastes and standards. But it provided the forum for people participation through its tradition of promoting freedom of expression.

During the early nineties, scholars began to express interest in evolving an "Asian model of communication and mass media." Regional political leaders, notably Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore and Mahathir Mohammad of Malaysia also started advocating for an "Asian model of democracy." What was envisioned is a "free press

committed to societal ideals" (Ibrahim 1994) and therefore blends with the "communitarian" values of most Asian societies.

This comprehensive history of Philippine communication would show the: (1) development of traditional or folk media even as early as the pre-Spanish period; (2) development of mass media infrastructure (print, broadcast and cinema) and later, new information technology; (3) growth and development of communication as a profession and discipline; (4) application of communication strategies, media and information technology in various development areas; (5) regional and national efforts in rationalizing communication through policies, programs, trainings and other mechanisms; (6) key actors or players—individuals and institutions who have shaped the sector; and (7) directions and trends in communication both at the global and national levels.

This article synthesizes and analyzes issues and events and the impact of communication and mass media on global, national and local developments and suggests new directions within the context of existing values and national priorities. In order to trace the evolution of the sector, a chronology of historical issues and events from the pre-Spanish period up to the present is provided. The scope of this article covers all the academic and applied areas in communication, although more emphasis may have been given to mass media especially journalism and communication education.

### The Pre-Spanish Era

Long before the colonizers introduced modern communication technology, an indigenous form of communication had already been in existence in the country. Ancient Filipinos wrote on the barks of trees, on leaves and bamboo tubes, using pointed instruments such as knives, and other sharp tools and the colored saps of trees as ink (Agoncillo and Guerrero 1978). To announce the promulgation of new rules and regulations in a *barangay* (small community), a town crier called *umalohokan* went around the community to make public announcements.

Literature was also well-developed. Among the forms of literature during the pre-colonial years were: the *sabi* (maxim), the *bugtong* (riddle), the *kumintang* (war song) of the Tagalogs, the *tutul* (folk tale) and the *darangan* (epic poetry) of the Maranaws, and the *hudhud* (wedding song) of the Ifugaos.

The coming of the colonial powers aborted the cultivation of what could have been a unique oriental culture. The colonizers introduced a totally different way of life that now serves as the basic foundation of the present social, political and cultural structure. The westernization of the Philippines signaled the beginning of an era characterized by a continuing diffusion of western values, traditions and technology into the country.

### The Spanish Colonial Rule (1521–1898)

The first newspaper was established in the Philippines in 1811. The paper, *Del Superior Gobierno*, was published with the Spanish Governor General himself as editor. It was specifically aimed at local Spaniards, thus focusing primarily on news from Spain. This, in spite of important domestic events taking place like the growing disenchantment of Filipinos with the colonizers. As a result of strict government censorship, the editorial content of Spanish-era newspapers suffered. Journalism historian John Lent (1971) described early colonial newspapers as more literary than newsy in style, often depended on satires, poems and news laced with sarcasm. Stories were long and rambling and most of the news concerned events abroad.

The first daily newspaper, *La Esperanza* (1846), also catered to the Spanish elite. To avoid trouble with censors, it dealt with non-controversial subjects such as religion, science, and history. The best edited newspaper, *Diario de Manila*, was suppressed by the Governor General after thirty-eight years of publication for allegedly inciting the Filipinos to rebel against the Spaniards. Meanwhile, the first local (regional) publication was *El Ilocano* which started in 1893 while the first publication for and by women, *El Hogar*, was published in 1893.

The history of free press in the Philippines has its roots in nationalistic newspapers published in Europe and in the Philippines during the Spanish colonial regime. The aim was to raise the level of consciousness with respect to oppressive conditions prevailing in the country then. For most of these newspapers, however, their origin was elitist. They were mainly published and written by the so-called *ilustrados* and read mostly by the same group.

Foremost among the nationalistic newspapers was the *La Solidaridad*, the mouthpiece of the reformists and the fortnightly organ of the Propaganda Movement. Published in Spain, it first ap-

peared in 1889 with the policy "to work peacefully for social and economic reforms, to expose the real plight of the Philippines, and to champion liberalism and democracy."

The Propaganda Movement was organized in Spain by Filipinos studying in Europe who are now among our national heroes—Graciano Lopez Jaena, Jose Rizal, Marcelo H. del Pilar, Mariano Ponce, Juan Luna, among others (Corpuz 1989). It is interesting to note that the history of Philippine journalism is silent on the initial role of women journalists in the struggle for Philippine independence against the Spanish colonizers. Perhaps, their limited access to higher educational opportunities curtailed their participation in socio-political affairs (Braid 1996).

Other newspapers which advocated for political reforms included *Kalayaan* (liberty), the only issue of which was published in 1898. *Kalayaan* served as the official organ of the Katipunan. Historians are unanimous in pointing out that the most important reason for the exponential growth of the Katipunan was the publication of *Kalayaan*. From only 300 members, the secret society grew to 30,000. *La Independencia* (1898) was the most widely read newspaper of the Revolution. Other newspapers were *La Libertad* (1898) and *El Heraldo de Iloilo* (1898).

The newspaper was not the only medium used in advocating for reforms and mobilizing support for the Revolution. They also used literature, music and arts. Andres Bonifacio wrote the original *Kartilya* (which was later revised by Emilio Jacinto) and the immortal poem, *Pag-ibig sa Tinubuang Lupa*. Apolinario Mabini wrote the *True Decalogue*. Juan Luna and Felix Resurreccion-Hidalgo communicated the Filipino soul through their mastery of the palette. Another foremost communicator was Julian Felipe who composed the *Marcha Nacional Filipina*, now *Lupang Hinirang*, the Philippine national anthem.

But even earlier, in the late 1820s and the 1830s, Francisco Balagtas, dubbed as "poet of the people" was already at the forefront of political activism. His works, including the popular *Florante at Laura*, instilled not only love of country but also fanned the flames of the spreading discontentment with Spanish rule (Sevilla 1997). Except for works by Bonifacio, Balagtas and a few others, most of the important literary and journalistic works were written in Spanish. The task of translating them into the local vernacular so that they could become potent tools in awakening mass consciousness became the responsibility of a few patriotic ilustrados. The use of the power of

the pen by the early heroes to expose colonial exploitation and seek independence is perhaps the most important non-violent strategy for social and political reforms.

Folk media which were used during the pre-Spanish period continued to provide the information, education and entertainment needs of the people. Coseteng and Nemenzo (1986) noted the strong Spanish or Christian elements grafted into their original forms. Among our folk media are *cenaculo*, *pastores*, *pasyon*, *awit* and *corrido*, *balagtasán*, *balitao*, and *duplo*.

### The American Colonial Period: 1898–1946

The American regime saw the introduction of new newspapers published mostly by American journalists: *The Manila Times* (1898), *The Bounding Billow* and *Official Gazette* (1898), *Manila Daily Bulletin* (1900), and *Philippine Free Press* (1908). The editorial content of these newspapers was pro-American, written in English, and based on religious and political partisanship. In 1920, *The Philippine Herald*, a pro-Filipino newspaper, came out. This was organized through the efforts of Manuel L. Quezon, who later became the President of the Philippine Commonwealth.

The more nationalistic newspapers during the period did not last long due to American suppression of nationalistic journalism and literature. For example, in 1900, a youthful Sergio Osmeña founded in Cebu the nationalistic daily *El Nuevo Dia* or *The New Day*, along with Rafael Palma and Jaime C. de Veyra. The American regime suspended the paper twice and threatened the staff with deportation. Similar pressures were exerted on other papers with nationalistic tendencies like *El Renacimiento* which, at the height of American occupation in 1908, came out with a scathing editorial entitled *Aves Rapina* or *Birds of Prey*, which denounced the abuses of American government officials and businessmen.

The most serious threat to the American rule after the capture of Gen. Emilio Aguinaldo would again be catalyzed by a humble newspaper which used the vernacular—the Tagalog newspaper *Sakdal*. Its founder Benigno Ramos probably named his newspaper after Emile Zola's sensational novel *J' Accuse* (*I Accuse*). Like its namesake, *Sakdal* attacked American abuses and became an instant hit with the masses. It made Ramos a cult hero for attacking regressive taxes, big government, and abusive capitalists and landlords. Quite ahead of his

time, he also called for: 1) the breakup of haciendas so it may be distributed to its tillers; 2) the use of the vernacular in all schools as medium of instruction instead of English; and 3) for the immediate and complete independence of the Philippine. *Sakdal* evolved into a political party and surprised everyone by winning national and local seats in the 1934 elections. Ramos and his followers, however, were too impatient and prematurely staged an uprising a year later. They succeeded only in briefly capturing Cabuyao and Sta. Rosa in Laguna and San Ildefonso in Bulacan.

Because of the suppressed press, Filipinos turned to *talinhaga* or symbolism, a uniquely Filipino way of expressing protest. Dramatists wrote inflammatory propaganda pieces masquerading as *zarzuelas* to keep the idea of independence burning among their countrymen. The Americans, though, later caught on and jailed a number of nationalist writers. Among them were Juan Abad, who was jailed for his play *Tanikalang Ginto* and *Isang Punlo ng Kaaway* which caused his rearrest, and Aurelio Tolentino, who wrote *Kahapon, Ngayon at Bukas*. Tolentino's play particularly caught the ire of the authorities because it was boldly anti-American and pro-Philippine independence. Tolentino also translated the play into Pampango and Bikol and staged it in many native theaters in Manila and several provincial towns. Consequently, he was sentenced to life imprisonment which was later reduced to fifteen years, then to eight, then seven years, due to popular clamor for his release.

Broadcasting was introduced in 1922 when three radio stations were established by an American national. When World War II broke out in 1941, there were only four radio stations in the country. The first radio stations were either owned by department stores or were part of a newspaper-radio chain. Program content consisted primarily of entertainment while radio stations owned by department stores were used to advertise their merchandise. Advertising of products other than those of the station owners began only in 1932. In 1929, KZRC, the first provincial radio station was established in Cebu City. However, it merely relayed programs originally aired by KZRM in Manila. This Manila-centric programming was to continue up to today.

Among the modern media, films in the Philippines preceded broadcasting by almost twenty years. The first movies made their appearance as early as 1904. Five years later, two Americans produced two silent movies on the life of the national hero, Jose Rizal.

Early movies were based on zarzuela stories which portrayed nationalism and Filipino heroism during the Spanish regime. By 1939,

the Philippine movie industry ranked fifth in the world in film production. Local movies became more "adult" and contained realistic plots and acceptable characterizations during the next decades.

Movie censorship was first introduced in 1929 with the creation of the Board of Censorship for Moving Pictures. The Board was mandated to "prohibit the exhibition of films perceived as immoral and contrary to law and good customs or injurious to the prestige of the government or people of the Philippine islands" (De Vega 1975). Over the decades, the Board's name has been constantly changed but its perspectives have remained conservative—Board of Review for Moving Pictures (1938), Board of Censors for Motion Pictures (1961), Board of Review for Motion Pictures and Television (1981), and the current Movie and Television Review and Classification Board (1985). The changes also reflected the shift in preference for film classification rather than outright censorship.

The commercial media system introduced by the Americans inevitably led to the introduction of the advertising and public relations professions in the country. The first recorded advertising agency in the Philippines, according to Crisostomo (1967) was the Philippine Publicity Service, Inc. founded in 1921. It was followed by the Philippine Agency Service Company. Both were founded by Americans. These ad agencies merely served as clearing houses for advertisements coming from the United States. In 1929, Florentino Garriz founded the first Filipino-owned agency, the Philippine Advertising Bureau. Among the other pioneers in Philippine Advertising were Pedro E. Teodoro, R. R. dela Cruz, Antonio R. de Joya, Gregorio Araneta, Jose A. Carpio, Leon Hontiveros and Javier Romero.

Communication education in the Philippines was introduced only a decade after the first journalism/ communication school in the United States was founded at the University of Missouri in the early 1920s. The first communication program had its formal beginnings in 1936 when the University of Sto. Tomas (UST) established a journalism major within its Faculty of Philosophy and Letters (now Faculty of Arts and Letters) with the degree Bachelor of Literature, major in Journalism (Litt.B.). This makes the Philippines the first in Asia to offer a formal degree in journalism/ communication. In 1919, the University of the Philippines (UP) developed and offered the first journalism courses in the country (Maslog 1988).

Broadcast journalists and former war correspondent Norman Reyes who anchored Voice of Freedom demonstrated what radio can do in keeping the morale of the Filipino people during World War II.



His stirring broadcast during the fall of Bataan is a classic in broadcast journalism.

### Japanese Occupation: 1941–1945

When World War II broke out, all publications except those used by the Japanese were disbanded. Only the *Manila Tribune*, *Taliba*, and *La Vanguardia* were allowed to publish under regular censorship by the Japanese Imperial Army. All publications taken over by the Japanese military administration were placed under the Osaka Mainichi Publishing Company. A board of information served as the regulatory body. Its function was to “control, direct, supervise, and coordinate all information and publicity of the Japanese-sponsored government.”

However, Filipinos during the period were not left without an “alternative” media. Underground papers, mostly typewritten or mimeographed, proliferated to provide the people with counter information. Despite threats that possession of a copy would mean death, the people continued to patronize them. Stage shows, more popularly known as the *vodavil*, also served as alternative medium. Colorful and varied, these “stage shows” were interpolated with musical melodrama and comedies reminiscent of the zarzuela of the earlier years. Comedians who dared to make fun of the Japanese invaders were incarcerated in Fort Santiago.

A significant event in Philippine journalism during the period was when Gen. Carlos P. Romulo then with *Philippine Herald* was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Correspondence in 1942. He was the first and only Filipino to win this coveted prize.

### The Postwar Era: 1945–1972

This period is called the golden age of Philippine journalism. Philippine press was regarded as “the freest in Asia.” Among its practitioners were a clutch of scholarly, noble-minded writers and editors. Among them were Mauro Mendez, Arsenio Lacson, Modesto Farolan, Leon Guerrero, J.V. Cruz, Antonio Escoda, Armando Malay, S.P. Lopez, Jose Bautista. A number of women journalists also began making a mark in the profession although many were still confined in the so-called “lipstick beat”—i.e., coverage of home and society,

fashion, food and lifestyle, and so on. Among the pioneering women journalists who covered serious matters were Trinidad Legarda, Paz Mendez, Paz Marquez Benitez, Maria Kalaw who wrote for such publications as the early *Manila Times*, *The Tribune* and *Philippine Free Press*. Other prominent women journalists were Carmen Guerrero Nakpil, Nati Nuguid, Rosalinda and Leonor Orosa who wrote serious columns for several newspapers and magazines. Meanwhile, among the pioneer women reporters were Janena Austria, Mary Ruff Tagle, Alice Colet and Dende Montilla.

The press during this particular period was forced to a "marriage of convenience" to large business enterprises and political groups. Most of the newspapers were wholly or partly owned by large business complexes. The Lopezes, who were into shipping, had interests in the *Manila Chronicle*; the Elizaldes, who were engaged in rope, insurance and broadcasting, owned the *Evening News*; the Soriano companies (dairy, softdrinks, airlines) had *Herald*; the Aranetas, who were in sugar and real estate, controlled *Weekly Graphic*; and Menzi, who has farm plantations, owned *Bulletin* and *Liwayway*.

Aside from being allied with business complexes, some of these newspapers had control and interest in other media particularly radio and television. *Manila Chronicle* then owned about thirty radio stations and television channels, *Manila Times* had at least four radio stations and two television stations, *The Herald* was affiliated with a radio-television network. Media enterprises, being dependent on business and political subsidies practiced self-censorship and filtering of information that is perceived to be detrimental to benefactors.

To describe media ownership structure during the period, Pineda-Ofreneo (1984) quoted veteran journalist and former UP president Salvador P. Lopez who said: "with media owned, organized and operated by rich families or powerful corporate bodies, it followed that they were instinctively committed to the defense of their own clans interest." Pineda-Ofreneo's book, *The Manipulated Press* documented concrete instances of the predominance of the publishers' interest over the right of free expression of the journalists. Among those cited were the forced resignation of Renato Constantino in June 1972 from *The Manila Chronicle* for writing columns inimical to the interests of Meralco, also a Lopez-owned company. A similar case is Nick Joaquin's departure from *Asia-Philippine Leader* published by the Jacinto family who owned the Iligan Integrated Steel Mills.

The 1950s saw the introduction of development broadcasting through farm programs which were aired on some radio stations. The

Philippine Broadcasting System was the pioneer in this area through its school broadcasts, features and documentaries on outstanding government programs and news public affairs programs. Under the leadership of Francisco "Koko" Trinidad, Philippine broadcasting entered into a regular program of exchange of cultural programs with countries in the Asian region.

Television, which was introduced in 1953 (DZAQ-TV 3, Manila) catered primarily to the high-income groups. Access was limited by prohibitive costs of sets (\$600 each). This was due to high import duties. It was not until 1960 when locally assembled sets were made available. By that time, there were already four television stations in the country. The first provincial television stations were established in 1968 in Cebu, Bacolod and Dagupan. Canned programs from the United States were cheaper than producing local live shows which were perceived as having inferior quality. Thus, the daily content of TV programming consisted of imported programs. In 1960, only 10 percent of the television programs were live (local) productions. The early dominance of American programs had developed preference for imported programs which no doubt contributed to the development of colonial mentality. The earliest initiative to use local television for education was through a program called, "Education on TV" aired in 1961. In the same year, the National Science Development Board aired a college course, "Physics in the Atomic Age." In 1964, a project called the Metropolitan Educational Association (META) in cooperation with the Ateneo Center for Television Closed Circuit Project, produced a television series in physics, Filipino and social sciences. These were broadcast in selected TV stations and were received by participating secondary schools, initially in Metro Manila and later, expanding in nearby provinces. The project, which ended in 1974, was headed by the former Leo Larkin, S.J., with Josefina Patron, Florangel Rosario, Lupita Concio and Maria Paz Diaz as the core technical staff.

The media during this time functioned as a real watchdog of the government. It was sensitive to national issues and critical of government mistakes. The most sensational news story during the decade was the murder in May 1966 of Ermin Garcia Sr., founder and publisher of the pioneering community newspaper, *Sunday Punch* in Dagupan City. Garcia was killed by a government official whom he was on the verge of exposing for involvement in an alleged money order racket (Maslog 1983). Garcia's death was to be among the first in a series of murders committed against (provincial) journalists up to this date.

Public relations gained prominence also during this period (Jamias et al. 1996, 192-93). Business coverage of revitalized Manila dailies prompted business corporations to employ fulltime public relations officers. Among the pioneers were Jose Carpio, Oscar Villadolid, Virgilio Pantaleon, Max Edralin, Francisco de Leon and Emcy C. Tinsay.

### Communication as a Discipline: Early Beginnings

In the late sixties to the seventies, Filipino communication scholars trained in US schools—University of Wisconsin, University of Minnesota, Northwestern University, Michigan State University, Syracuse University, to name a few, started returning to the Philippines. They constituted the pioneers in communication education in the country. These scholars brought with them western (mostly American) theories and models developed by social scientists in such disciplines as sociology, psychology, economics, anthropology and education. Among the western theorists were Lasswell, Pye, Schramm, Rogers, Lerner, Klapper, Lazarsfeld, Osgood and de Sola Pool. Communication as a discipline was primarily influenced by social psychology, enriched by other social sciences and utilizing the functionalist and diffusionist framework. During the fifties to early seventies, such theories as the two-step flow, cognitive dissonance and adoption-diffusion of innovation were continually (and unquestionably) replicated and served as models in the design of local social change programs and projects. Diffusion researchers and technologists, mostly in rural sociology, were the most active. There was also an upsurge of interest in the use of communication to support development efforts (Braid 1983).

Meanwhile, the number of schools/universities offering communication and journalism programs continued to increase. Some were set up by these *balik scholars*. Lyceum University established a School of Journalism in 1952, Philippine Women's University in 1960. The UPLB Department of Agricultural Information (now Institute of Development Communication) started in 1962. The UP Institute of Mass Communication was established in 1965 with Dr. Gloria D. Feliciano as first dean. During the same year, Ateneo de Manila University opened its Department of Communication with Dr. Josefina Patron as head. Other pioneering communication departments were established in: Maryknoll (now Miriam) College (1965), Assumption Col-

lege (1969), St. Paul's College-Quezon City (1968), and Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng Maynila (1969). Outside Metro Manila, the first School of Journalism and Communication was established by Dumaguete City-based Silliman University in 1966. Other schools with communication programs were: West Visayas State College (1965), and St. Louis University-Baguio City (1968).

But despite the existence of journalism schools, many newsrooms were manned by reporters who did not have formal journalism training. At that time, a college degree was even seen as a "liability" or "disability" by some editors and deskmen who believed that the "graduates" of the so-called "school of hard knocks" were better equipped to be reporters as they have the "nose for news." This bias against college graduates was to continue up to the 1980s when journalism graduates were able to prove their worth both in the newsbeats and newsrooms as deskmen and editors. Greater openness for college graduates as reporters in later years was facilitated by several factors. Editors and senior journalists were invited by journalism schools as part-time lecturers. Among them were the late Jose Luna Castro, Crispulo Icban Jr., Pocholo Romualdez, Hernando Abaya, I.P. Soliongco, and Armando Malay. Jose Luna Castro also wrote what may be considered as the "bible" in Philippine journalism—*Style Book of the Manila Times* (1960) and *Manila Times Journalism Manual* (1963). The publication is now updated as *Jose Luna Castro's Handbook of Journalism* (1990).

Many journalists were also awarded fellowships (e.g. Fulbright Hays and Thomson Foundation) and scholarships in American universities which made them realize the advantages of formal journalism training. Finally, there were the initial graduates of journalism schools who excelled in their field and therefore, earned the respect and recognition of their peers. Many of them eventually became editors and deskmen. Among them were Ben Rodriguez, Julie Yap Daza, Ofelia Alcantara, Alice Colet-Villadolid, Francisco Tatad, and Vic Maliwanag.

Career opportunities, however, were limited for journalism and communication graduates who competed for limited employment opportunities in Metro Manila. A number of government agencies employed public information officers but political considerations influenced appointments rather than competence and skills (Tuvera 1958). Among the agencies with information offices were Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources (DANR), Social Welfare Administration (now Department) Department of Public Works and Com-

munications, National Waterworks and Sewerage Authority (NAWASA), and Social Security System (SSS). Others ventured into the glamorous world of advertising and public relations. Then as it is now, students were attracted to the glamor, excitement, and power of the mass media and advertising making communication and journalism popular courses.

In 1954, the National Media Production Center (NMPC) created under the Office of the President was mandated to produce information and education materials for government development programs. During its initial years, NMPC was able to isolate itself from political propaganda. NMPC suffered from lack of funds as well as equipment and facilities. But during the martial law years of the Marcos regime, it was transformed into a well-endowed agency and used for political propaganda and image-building. The Center was abolished with the assumption into power of the Aquino administration. Among the "builders" of NMPC were Hernando R. Ocampo, Conrado V. Pedroche and Gregorio Cendaña.

Public (government) information during the period was described in the pioneering study of Juan C. Tuvera on Mass Communication in Philippine Government (1958) which came out with these findings: (a) the government had no integrated information plan and resulted in duplication in information work; (b) removal by Congress of "Information" items from the budget; (c) lack of professional attitude to information work; (d) political considerations influenced appointments of information officers; and (e) lack of effective monitoring of information campaigns. The same problems remain to date.

The National Press Club (NPC) was organized in 1952. Its objectives were: (1) promote cooperation among journalists; (2) adopt a code of ethics; and (3) uphold press freedom and the dignity of journalists. The NPC, however, is criticized for functioning more as a "social club." Other professional groups of journalists, although established in later years were the Manila Overseas Press Club (MOPC) with local and foreign journalists as members and the Foreign Correspondents Association of the Philippines (FOCAP) whose members are limited to correspondents of foreign news agencies operating in the country. In 1957, the Public Relations Society of the Philippines (PRSP) was founded. The association spurred professional growth through seminars, workshops, training programs, awards, and publications (Jamias 1996). The Philippine Association of National Advertisers (PANA) was established a year later by industry leaders who saw the need for an organization which will enable advertisers

to jointly address industry issues and concerns. It was also committed to promote truth in advertising. In May 1974, the Philippine Board of Advertising (renamed Advertising Board of the Philippine or ADBOARD) was formed as the self-regulatory body of the industry. It was to be a model in self-regulation in the Asian region. A Code of Ethics, Rules and Regulations of Advertising and Sales Promotion adopted in 1975 is continually updated. The Philippine Press Institute (PPI) organized in 1964 was envisioned as a professional institution to help foster the development and improvement of journalism in the country. The PPI was active in publishing books and instructional materials. Among these were *Clear and Effective Writing* (1969), *How to Manage a Community Newspaper* and Atty. Perfecto V. Fernandez' *Law of the Press Handbook*. These publications were not only used in PPI trainings later but became textbooks in communication schools. When martial law was declared in 1972, it had to cease its operations as most of its officers notably Juan Mercado, Chino Roces, and Eugenio Lopez, Jr. were arrested.

### **The Marcos Years: 1969–1986**

When martial law was declared on 21 September 1972, the first order issued by the late President Ferdinand E. Marcos was for the press secretary and the secretary of national defense to "take over and control or cause the taking over and control of all privately-owned newspapers, magazines, radio and television facilities and all other media communications." Editors and journalists were among the first to be arrested and incarcerated in military prison camps. The martial law regime criticized the then existing media as having "contributed heavily to national paralysis and instability that in the end required massive reforms and crisis government." Of the various pre-martial law newspapers, only the *Daily Express* and *Bulletin Today* (now *Manila Bulletin*) were allowed to reopen. A new newspaper, *Times Journal*, was allowed to open one month after the proclamation.

The newly organized Department of Public Information required clearance to publish or air; foreign reports were screened and censored. The press during the martial law was "highly" controlled. This was described as "reflective of the early part of the crisis government, of a fairly authoritarian system in which government exerted controls and regulations over media." During the period, the print

media changed its traditional adversary relationship with the government to that of "cooperation." As described by the former information minister, "the period of government control produced for the first time in our national history, a media industry that appeared to be a willing ally of government" (Cendaña 1980).

Many journalists learned to practice brinkmanship and even self-censorship in order to survive or avoid direct confrontation with the regime. Others engaged in what was then known as innocuous writing and writing between lines, while readers learned the art of "interpretative" reading. A Media Advisory Council sent out instruction on what stories should not be used. Thus, stories on the Muslim rebellion were killed. Nearly the entire staff of *We Forum*, an opposition paper was jailed in 1982.

One of the reasons given by the late President Marcos for the sequestration of pre-martial law newspapers was their oligarchic structure of ownership which, he said, negated the essence of press freedom. However, efforts to broaden media ownership did not succeed. Ownership became even more concentrated in the hands of few individuals or families who had close alliance with the regime. Marcos used his autocratic powers to put telecommunications under his control. Presidential decrees were issued mandating monopolistic ownership of telecommunications favoring relatives and friends. Telephony was monopolized by the Philippine Long Distance Telephone Company, domestic satellite by DomSat Phils., Cable Television by *Sining Makulay*, among others. Such consolidation was made under the guise of "social and economic development" and "national and regional integration." Owing to its capital intensive nature, Marcos' cronies were forced to enter into joint venture agreements with foreign partners signaling the start of "transnationalization" of the Philippine Telecommunication Industry. Among the foreign partners were Cable and Wireless, Marubeni, and Siemens GTE.

World Bank also started to play an influential role in the telecommunication sector with multimillion dollar loans. It is alleged that previous National Telecommunication Development Plans were based on policy and program options prepared by the Bank. Gerard Sussman, a noted communication scholar whose research focused on telecommunications in Third World countries including the Philippines noted that Philippine telecommunications facilitated the consolidation and integration of information structures that ultimately serve the ideological, cultural, material and political interests of transnationals. Sussman also decried the absence of debate even



among the Filipino intelligentsia on the significance and consequences of telecommunications as technological infrastructure (Sussman and Lent 1991).

In 1984, the Asian Institute of Journalism and Communication's UNESCO-commissioned study on the state of newspapers during the Marcos regime documented some of the insidious approaches to control media such as: (1) legal restrictions on free flow of information through presidential decrees, letters of instructions, etc., which contain vague words or phrases such as "national security," "best interest of the state," "emergency," etc. which are open to very narrow or broad interpretations forcing some journalists and editors to practice self-censorship; (2) indiscriminate libel cases against journalists with "crippling" financial penalties; (3) coordination usually through telephone calls by press agencies of the government with the editorial desks; (4) unwritten guidelines or taboo topics such as no criticisms on Marcos family; and (5) military interference through libel suits by military officers and actual dialogues or interrogation of journalists.

Amidst this repressive political environment, many Filipino filmmakers, among them the late Lino Brocka, Mike de Leon, Laurice Guillen, Marilou Diaz-Abaya, Eddie Romero, Ishmael Bernal, Lupita Kashiwahara, Peque Gallaga, Celso Ad Castillo, etc., were able to produce films which critics now consider as among the best in Philippine cinema. Many of these films focused on sensitive political and social issues such as agrarian reform, labor unrest, poverty, American imperialism, etc. Among these films were *Maynila Sa Mga Kuko ng Liwanag* (1975), *Himala* (1982), *Sister Stella L.* (1984), *Bona*, *Bayan Ko: Kapit sa Patalim*, *Burlesk Queen*, and *Minsa'y Isang Gamu-Gamu*. That these controversial films were exhibited during Marcos years did not mean a high degree of tolerance by the dictator but that they were used to demonstrate that "press freedom" prevailed.

### Image Engineering and the Marcoses

Never in Philippine history has the role of communication (with focus on image building) in government been highlighted more than during the Marcos years. From the time martial law was declared in 1972 until Marcos' rule was forcibly ended in 1986, the government put on a massive and sustained propaganda campaign, both locally and worldwide, especially in the United States. Emphasis was on ensuring sustained U.S. government and military support, and on

technical assistance to the Philippine government (Jamias 1996). The Marcos government's well-oiled Office of Media Affairs and National Media Production Center may have been largely responsible for the continuous twenty-year rule of the Marcoses despite human rights abuses, graft, and corruption. Government information officers were tasked to launch massive information campaigns not only on government policies and programs but to promote the image of the top political leadership as well. Majority of these information officers were not given plantilla positions in the bureaucracy, a problem which remains to this day.

The Kapisanan ng mga Brodkaster sa Pilipinas (KBP) was organized in 1973 to provide a mechanism for self-regulation in the broadcast industry. The KBP adopted separate Television and Radio Codes, which set program standards for news, public affairs and commentaries, political broadcasts, children's shows, religious programming and advertising. It also instituted an accreditation program given to radio personalities. The KBP remains an active partner of government in the formulation of policies and programs involving the industry. In December 1972, government information officers organized the Public Relations Organization of the Philippines (PROP) to foster stronger fellowship and cooperation among its members and to raise the status of PR practitioners in government through continuing education and awards. Its founders include Ramiro Alvarez, Zacarias Nuguid, Rolando Manuel, Pilar Quintos, Guillermo Sison, Noe Andaya and Teresita Padua.

In the movie industry, the seventies is known as the era of the *bomba* films which refers to sex-oriented movies which outrightly appeal to prurient interest. Marcos critics claimed that the regime encouraged such movies to deviate public attention from their problems and social and political ills plaguing the country then. A film director noted that the upsurge of this genre (both local and foreign) coincided with "the appeal to the leisure complexes of the masses by a mainstream cinema whose audiences sought refuge in mass cult and anonymity to forget the realities of their everyday lives—inflation, poverty, unemployment, etc." (Deocampo 1985). The 1970s also saw the emergence of the controversial field of development communication. More popularly referred to as Dev Com, its advocates envisioned it as the purposive application of communication resources and strategies in development programs, initially in rural and agricultural development. Dev Com was popularized by the then Department of Development Communication (now Institute) at UP Los

Baños. Among its UPLB-based advocates were Dr. Nora C. Quebral, Dr. Juan F. Jamias, Dr. Tomas Flores and Dr. Ely Gomez. Meanwhile, the Manila-based Press Foundation for Asia (PFA) also batted for development journalism which highlights reportage on such issues and events as population, science and technology, health, nutrition, and education. For years, PFA-published *Depthnews* served as model in development journalism not only in the Philippines but in the entire Asian region. Among its proponents were Juan Mercado, Alan Chalkley and the late Jose Luna Castro.

Another institution committed to development communication was the Communication Foundation for Asia (CFA), founded in 1975 by the late Fr. Cornelio Lagerway, MSC. CFA pioneered in the use of mass media in spreading the word of God. CFA introduced gospel comics, children's magazines—*Pambata* and *Barkada* and radio drama series. In 1976, the Department of Development Communication at UPLB became the first in the world to offer undergraduate and graduate degrees in development communication. The Dev Com curriculum was later copied in regional communication departments/schools nationwide by graduates of UPLB. Development communication broadened career opportunities for communication graduates. In addition to working with the mass media, they found employment as extension agents, science communication specialists, community organizers, and public information officers. With the popularity of this concept, government propagandists were quick to cite the development communication philosophy as "defense" for their highly criticized (and politicized) communication campaigns. To distinguish Dev Com from the government's information campaign, its advocates referred to the latter as "developmental" communication or journalism.

### **Rekindling the Nationalist Tradition of the Press**

To counter propaganda churned out by the pro-government private media and the government's own media infrastructure, the so-called alternative press began to emerge in the 1980s. Among these publications and the people behind them were: the father-and-son team Jose Burgos who were behind the courageous tabloid *WE Forum* and its broadsheet affiliate, *Pahayagang Malaya*; Felix Bautista and Melinda Q. de Jesus edited *Veritas*; Raul and Leticia Locsin published *Business Day* (now *Business World*); Eugenia D. Apostol and Leticia J. Magsanoc published and edited *Inquirer* and *Mr. and Ms. Magazine*.

Apostol was later joined by Betty Go Belmonte, Max Soliven, S.P. Lopez, Art Borjal, Louie Beltran, Florangel Rosario-Braid, among others in putting out *Philippine Daily Inquirer*.

In addition to the above alternative press, the people also opted for "samizdat" or "xerox journalism." These were news clippings, mostly from foreign publications, censored for mass dissemination by the regime, which provided an accurate reading of developments in the country. Many of these articles were written by Filipinos working for the foreign news services—Fernando del Mundo of *United Press International (UPI)*; Rommel Corro of *Associated Press (AP)*; Teodoro Benigno, Roberto Coloma and Ruben Alabastro of *Agence France Presse (AFP)*; Rigoberto Tiglao and Sheila Ocampo of the *Far East Economic Review*; Alice C. Villadolid of *New York Times*; Maritess Vitug of *Newsweek*; and Nelly Sindayen of *Time*.

An unintended impact of the controlled media environment was the liberation of women journalists from traditional roles. Women journalists, more than their male colleagues, proved to be more daring and independent in their writing. Even the emergence of the so-called alternative press came about essentially through the efforts of women editors and journalists. Several women journalists were subjected to harassment, threats, and intimidation by the military. In the end, the struggle for press freedom often centered on women journalists aptly portrayed as martyrs or victims. Among these courageous women journalists were Eugenia D. Apostol, Betty Go-Belmonte, Letty Magsanoc, Arlene Babst, Ninez Cacho Olivares, Domini Torrevillas, Melinda Q. de Jesus, Tina Monzon Palma, and Malou Mangahas.

Among the outstanding heroes during the struggle against the Marcos regime was Joaquin "Chino" Roces, publisher of the pre-martial law *The Manila Times* and regarded as Grand Old Man of Philippine journalism. Despite his age and frail health, *Don Chino* was in almost all anti-government street rallies and demonstrations—leading and inspiring. He is best remembered for launching a fund campaign for the widow Corazon C. Aquino who ran against Marcos in 1986. Other crusading journalists aside from those already mentioned were Teodoro Locsin, Sr., Napoleon Rama, and the late Antonio Ma. Nieva.

The nationalistic fervor is also strongly manifested among the youth through campus publications which have taken an activist stand on national issues. Notable among them were the *Philippine Collegian* of the UP-Diliman, *Ang Malaya* of the Philippine College of

Commerce (now Polytechnic University of the Philippines), *Pandayan* of Ateneo de Manila University, *Ang Hasik* of the Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng Maynila and *Balawis* of Mapua Institute of Technology (Ofreneo 1984). The underground communist movement also had their voice in *Ang Bayan* and *Ang Komunista* while the radical youth group Kabataang Makabayan published *Kalayaan*.

*Who Magazine* put out by the Bulletin-owned Liwayway Publications was perhaps the boldest publication as it carried stories on victims of human rights, indigenous communities resisting development programs and public sentiment about the state of society. Among the radical priests who went underground was Edicio dela Torre who wrote a critique on Philippine society.

Among the young journalists who devoted their prime years to the national democratic movement were Rosalinda Galang who before she went underground was a star reporter of *The Manila Times*. As a member of the editorial collective of *Ang Bayan*, the official paper of the revolutionary movement, she and the others made this underground paper a strong voice during the dictatorship. Sonia Dipasupil-Barros who like Galang recently passed away was also an activist journalist and as writer in the *WE Forum*, she did a remarkable reportage of the Ka Lando Olalia assassination.

### Opening of More Communication Schools

Despite media control, communication education continued to expand during the Marcos years. When the first survey of communication schools was conducted in 1970–71, there were only thirteen institutions offering degree programs in journalism and communication. More than a three-fold increase was noted in the 1984–85 survey which showed at least forty-two institutions (Maslog 1988). Of this number, twenty-three were based in the provinces. In contrast, in 1970–71, there were only two institutions offering communication programs. Maslog estimated that in schoolyear 1984–85, there were about 5,700 students enrolled in the forty-two communication schools or departments nationwide. Female students dominated communication programs at a ratio of 70:30, a ratio which still holds today. Communication programs are stereotyped as belonging to the so-called “soft” disciplines (including those related to Arts and Culture) as against the male-dominated disciplines of engineering, information technology, architecture, among others. It was also narrowly per-

ceived as involving glamor, beauty and art (Tuazon 1997). The 1985–86 study revealed that 60 percent of communication programs were of the generalist type. This means students do not have a major field of study or cover a broad area of communication (i.e. mass communication and communication arts). In contrast, a specialist program offers a specific area such as journalism, broadcasting, communication research, speech communication and development communication.

The Philippine Association of Communication Educators (PACE) was founded in 1976 to provide a venue for sharing of lessons and experiences in communication education. PACE took the initiative in improving existing communication curricula, conduct training for its members, develop local learning materials, conduct communication education research, among others. Among the founders of PACE were Dr. Nora C. Quebral, Fr. Alberto Ampil, Dr. Crispin Maslog, Dr. Zenaida Domingo, and Prof. Elizabeth L. Diaz.

Career options began to diversify in the late seventies as media organizations, particularly newspapers, began to hire more journalism graduates. Business companies set up public relations and corporate communication offices while government offices established their public information (or Development Communication) units. Advertising remained an attractive career option to most communication graduates. Top corporations, especially the multinationals, also began recognizing communication as a line management function.

*Pls. start from here*

### → **Early Applied Communication Programs**

Population (family planning) communication was the focus of global interest (as environmental communication is the point of interest today) from the late sixties throughout the seventies. Many communication scholars at that time became involved in research, information campaigns, technology transfer, training and cross cultural communication. Population communication projects received generous support from agencies such as the USAID and World Bank. The UP Institute of Mass Communication (UP-IMC) was the lead communication institution in this area.

Meanwhile, "social marketing" as a communication strategy was introduced application of commercial marketing principles to advance a social cause. The Department of Health (DOH) applied social marketing in family planning and maternal and child health programs supported by the Agency. Almost during the same period, Develop-

ment Support Communication (DSC) was popularized and applied particularly in integrated rural development. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) was the first to promote the concept. In 1969, the Development Support Communication Unit of FAO was created.

The Educational Development Projects Implementing Task Force (EDPITAF) Communication Technology Project started in the early 1970s developed policies and programs on the use of communication technology for education. Funded by a World Bank loan of US\$2 million and counterpart funding from the Philippine government, EDPITAF was to be a prelude to such projects as Program for Decentralized Education (PRODED) in the 1980s and the current Third Elementary Education Project (TEEP). Engr. John Lauengco, Dr. Gloria Feliciano, and Zenaida Domingo were the lead actors of the Community Technology project.

By mid-seventies to the eighties, applied communication programs broadened its focus on agriculture and rural development. Institutions such as UPLB, International Institute for Rural Reconstruction (IIRR), Philippine Rural Reconstruction Movement (PRRM) and the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) were among the active advocates of rural communication. But considered a communication "success story" was the information campaign for *Masagana 99* launched in 1973 as the country's rice self-sufficiency program (*masagana* means bountiful and 99 is the yield per hectare established as the goal). The information campaign consisted of multimedia utilizing radio, television, and print. Thousands of farm technologies or extension workers reinforced the media messages (Alvarez 1984).

Applied communications in the Philippines borrowed heavily from western communication theories, models and strategies (e.g. Roger's Diffusion of Innovations), a fact which can be traced from the western training acquired by early communication scholars. Communication was narrowly perceived as occurring in a linear process preoccupied with source or effect and with aggregate data as correlates of modernization. Communicators packaged and utilized information for the purpose of persuading people to adopt an idea or innovation. Mass media was seen to work best as a reinforcer operating within a nexus of mediating factors such as selective perception, selective retention, opinion leadership, etc. (Braid 1983). This heavy American influence was to be further reinforced by the heavy dependence on western textbooks and references in communication schools.

Towards the end of the seventies to the eighties, local communication scholars began questioning the relevance of western theories and models to Asian and developing country setting. Such questioning surfaced partly because of the inadequacies of the old models to explain and guide the development process in most developing countries. The traditional communication models were linear and suggested top-down rather than bottom-up or horizontal communication, whereas the requirements of development emphasize participatory communication. As a result, there was considerable upsurge of interest in (Asian) theory and model building as well as writing of local books.

Among our first locally-written and published (academic) communication books were *Philippine Mass Media in Perspective* (1967) by Gloria D. Feliciano and Crispulo J. Icban and *Readings in Development Communication* (1975) edited by Juan F. Jamias, *Mass Communications in the Philippine Government* (1977) by Juan C. Tuvera, and *Communication Strategies for Productivity Improvement* (1979) by F. Rosario-Braid. Local communication books began to be published more frequently in the mid-1980s. The Philippine Association of Communication Educators (PACE) was among the pioneers with the publication of *Philippine Communication: An Introduction* edited by Dr. Crispin Maslog in 1988. Other institutions active in communication book publishing were the Asian Institute of Journalism and Communication (AIJC), UP Institute of Development Communication, Communication Foundation for Asia (CFA), Ateneo de Manila University, and UP College of Mass Communication. The entry of local communication books did not only complement the foreign (usually American) references and textbooks which we still use today, but more important, they presented theories, concepts and practices reflective of our own socio-cultural, political and economic realities.

### **The Call for a New World Information Order**

The seeming dissatisfaction with the local communication environment was merely reflective of the global debate on need for a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) which was brought to fore by the International Commission for the Study of Communication (otherwise known as MacBride Commission) convened by the UNESCO in 1977. Broadly stated, NWICO expressed the



desire of the so-called Third World for a restructuring of the imbalance in the flow of information worldwide and communication policies which were perceived as advantageous to developed countries and the urban centers of developing countries. Among the issues raised in the MacBride Report were: one-way flow of information, control of mass media by economic and political elite groups, and homogenization of media content. Critics of NWICO, led by the United States (which decided to withdraw its membership from UNESCO in 1983) objected to alleged NWICO proposals calling for the setting up of policy guidelines (as this was construed as violation of the freedom of information), "licensing" of journalists, and "politicization" of UNESCO.

Among the leading advocates of NWICO in the Philippines was the Asian Institute of Journalism and Communication (AIJC). Organized in 1980 by the journalist-scholar team of Jose Luna-Castro and Dr. Florangel Rosario-Braid, the Institute's initial mandate was to develop a new breed of (Asian) journalists who can adequately respond to the needs of a developing country (region). Over the years, the Institute has convened a series of multisectoral consultations to develop a National Communication Policy Framework; published books/monographs on communication policy, community media and media issues; and engaged in action research in sustainable development, basic education and literacy, rural mobilization and cooperatives, women and child rights, among others. Today, the AIJC is considered one of the respected "think and do" tanks in the country in communication and development studies.

It is unfortunate that due to intense debate and politicization, little has been done to address the issues raised by the MacBride Commission. The same problems remain today, in fact they have become magnified. For example, the expansion of satellite communication and Internet has further strengthened the grip of information producers (western countries) on the worldwide flow of information and inevitably the promotion of western images and messages.

### **People Power and the Media Coalition (1986)**

For more than a decade, the indictment against the so-called "establishment" or pro-Marcos media increased in force, frequency and intensity. What was once regarded as the "freest in Asia" had been

transformed overnight by the Marcos regime into an instrument to perpetuate itself.

The assassination of opposition leader Benigno "Ninoy" S. Aquino Jr. in August 1983 proved to be the turning point. There emerged what was then known as the "alternative media." These were a handful of tabloid newspapers and radio stations which defied government instructions on how to handle news stories despite constant harassment and intimidations. Toward the end of 1985, these alternative media grew in number and enjoyed greater credibility than the pro-Marcos "establishment media." According to Magsanoc (1998), had Marcos loosened his grip on the media, Aquino's wake and funeral would not have escalated into a massive and sustained protest rally. The people did not have facts and so resorted to spreading information by word of mouth to the extent that a decree against rumor mongering was passed. This did not deter the Filipinos. The growth of the alternative press and its success showed the Filipinos' hunger for non-mainstream news. Subsequently, they began boycotting the Marcos press and booed media persons with links to Malacañang. Magsanoc adds that the alternative press will go down in history as the only free press in a time of lies, one that showed there can be no alternative to the truth.

The effective use of communication symbols such as yellow ribbons, yellow dress, confetti, etc. all contributed to the awakening of the Filipino. The citizenry also took to the streets through demonstrations and massive rallies led by the so-called street parliamentarians. Non-government organizations and cause-oriented groups were also at the forefront for socioeconomic and political reforms. With limited access to mass media and telecommunications, they resorted to creative communication strategies, primarily interpersonal, and in some cases, the use of codes to avoid detection by the military.

These so-called alternative media nurtured the democratic and freedom-loving spirit of the silent majority so much so that when the four-day revolution (22-25 February 1986) happened, the Filipinos were ready for the event. Church-owned *Radio Veritas* was credited with mobilizing people power to support the rebel soldiers against Marcos' military power. Millions of Filipinos followed the historic event from the clandestine *Radyo Bandido* anchored by a woman broadcaster, June Keithley.

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