

# philippine studies

Ateneo de Manila University • Loyola Heights, Quezon City • 1108 Philippines

---

## **Communication, Peace and Understanding in a Philippine Context**

Florangel Rosario-Braid

*Philippine Studies* vol. 32, no. 4 (1984) 441–457

Copyright © Ateneo de Manila University

---

Philippine Studies is published by the Ateneo de Manila University. Contents may not be copied or sent via email or other means to multiple sites and posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's written permission. Users may download and print articles for individual, noncommercial use only. However, unless prior permission has been obtained, you may not download an entire issue of a journal, or download multiple copies of articles.

Please contact the publisher for any further use of this work at [philstudies@admu.edu.ph](mailto:philstudies@admu.edu.ph).

<http://www.philippinestudies.net>  
Fri June 27 13:30:20 2008

**Communication, Peace and Understanding  
in a Philippine Context**

**FLORANGEL ROSARIO-BRAID**

The role of communication in national development is a popular theme in seminars and conferences which are addressed to issues such as the management of communication for productivity and livelihood concerns. But the goals of peace and understanding are as important, if not more so, than development support communication.

We use communication here to mean all forms of mass media, traditional and modern communication technology, and interpersonal communication. Communication is likewise seen within a small group or community setting or in a large-scale national system as an information delivery channel or as a facilitator for non-formal education. In development strategies, communication is utilized to mobilize and integrate individuals and groups, and the communication process is an interactive process involving continuing dialogue and mutuality.

**PEACE AND UNDERSTANDING**

Peace, as understood in this article, results from the eradication of poverty, illiteracy, oppression, and forces leading to physical destruction and erosion of cultural traditions. It is also seen as the result of understanding and trust and the resolution of conflict without the threat of violence. Wimal Dissanayake suggests two categories in looking at peace—the negative and the positive. The

This is a revised version of the paper given at the First National Conference on Peace Research, 7-10 April 1983, University of the Philippines, Los Baños, Philippines. The paper was written with Ramon R. Tuazon, Project Officer of AIJ.

former connotes the absence of war, violence, acts of terrorism and hostility and the latter, not only the absence of war, but more importantly, the establishment of a harmonious, functionally co-operative and well-integrated society. The latter places emphasis on the processes of creating the conditions for peace.<sup>1</sup> The Ghandian movement of nonviolence may be able to provide the perspective for peace education with the message that the continuation of the Western state system, the pursuit of unlimited wants and the complete neglect of the spiritual basis of community life together frustrated the creation of peace.<sup>2</sup>

Peace is the outcome of negotiation and exchange between groups which have differing value systems. Through exchange characterized by dialogue, empathy, and a willingness to give and take, the consequences are the perception of equality among interactors and the gradual blurring of power differences. Conflict, which brings about a ventilation of varied viewpoints, may at times be a necessary ingredient in the attainment of consensus. The frequency of communication exchange does not always guarantee that interactors who are in conflict will arrive at a peaceful resolution of their differences. The latter does not happen when the actors fail to realize that there is more than an exchange of viewpoints either verbally or through other channels. For example, it was pointed out that the stereotyped negotiating process in the North-South Dialogue during recent years tended to polarize positions and diminish hopes of agreement. Because of problems arising from attitudes (particularly on the part of the North), procedures and institutional considerations, it was suggested that greater use be made of the small-group negotiating technique and single-issue conferences as well as the willingness to accept diversity in the negotiating process.<sup>3</sup> While the size of a group is important in the negotiation process, what is crucial is that interactors perceive each other as benefitting from the exchange.

Genuine communication can only take place in a climate of trust where interactors have mutual respect for one another and where there is partnership and perception of the other as an ex-

1. Wimal Dissayanake, "Peace and Communication: A Buddhist Point of View," *Journal of the World Association for Christian Communication* 30 (1983):7-9.

2. *International Peace Research Newsletter* 17, nos. 5-6 (1979):30.

3. *Common Crisis, North-South: Cooperation for World Recovery* (London and Sydney: Pan Books, 1983), pp. 140-43.

tension of oneself. As Buber, the Jewish theologian, puts it in his "I and Thou" philosophy:

There is *genuine dialogue*—no matter whether spoken or silent—where each of the participants really has in mind the other or others in their present and particular being and turns to them with the intention of establishing a living mutual relationship between himself and the other.<sup>4</sup>

There is no dialogue if one party does not listen or insists on imposing his own view. In the field of politics, Reuel Howe states that if men could speak with one another not as pawns on a chess-board but as themselves in the sanctuary of truth, the sphere of public life would be transformed by the miracle of dialogue.<sup>5</sup> The Buddhist model of communication likewise places the highest emphasis on sharing and mutuality . . . and lays stress on the moral and ethical centers of interpersonal modes of communication.<sup>6</sup>

Authenticity in relationship, trust, humility—all these are the attributes of dialogue. When we relate dialogue and peace to the problems of oppressed countries, we find that communication goals have to be linked to equity and justice. The 1983 Christian World Conference in Uppsala on "Life and Peace"<sup>7</sup> reminds us that the struggle for peace in the Third World involves more than overcoming the perils of violent conflict. It means taking initiatives to create a world in which relationships between nations are based on a more equitable economic and world order.

### THE PHILIPPINE CONTEXT

Our discussion of the Philippine context will focus on five issues, namely: (1) The communication structure; (2) ownership of communication technology; (3) distribution of communication resources; (4) content of communication; and (5) communication processes.

4. Cited in Floyd W. Matson and Ashley Montagu, *The Human Dialogue: Perspectives on Communication* (New York: The Free Press, 1967), p. 113.

5. Reuel Howe, "The Miracle of Dialogue" in Matson and Montagu, *The Human Dialogue*, p. 153.

6. Dissanayake, "Peace and Communication," pp. 7-9.

7. IFOR Report, International Fellowship of Reconciliation, The Netherlands, October 1983, p. 4.

## THE COMMUNICATION STRUCTURE

In terms of the quantitative growth of our mass media system, the Philippines is comparable to some developed societies. At the end of 1983, there were 303 radio stations nationwide reaching about 95 percent of the entire country. Seventy-seven television stations/transmitters are located in 13 regions of the country. There are 353 publications and 1,007 cinema houses.<sup>8</sup>

A significant development is the emergence of what is now called the "alternative press." As of December 1983, there were ten of these anti-establishment newspapers, four of which started operations after the assassination of opposition leader Benigno S. Aquino, Jr., on 21 August 1983. Three were forced to close down before the end of 1983 for economic or political reasons. These alternative newspapers which are published weekly reflect opinions of the opposition and provide coverage of military abuses, graft and corruption and other news which is censored in the larger newspapers. Their average cost of ₱1.50 per issue is prohibitive, yet their circulation ranges from 20,000 to 100,000.<sup>9</sup>

Media resources are primarily concentrated in the urban areas. In addition to ownership and circulation figures, the number of media training institutions and of trained communication personnel would place the country a little above UNESCO's standards of minimum communication requirements.<sup>10</sup>

The growth of new communication technologies (computers, satellite, fiber optics, etc.) will undoubtedly usher in alterations in lifestyles and workstyles and other changes in our present social and political institutions. Their positive contribution is that they are able to assist in the processing and delivery of knowledge which is vital in decision-making as well as in promoting improved

8. Kapisanan ng mga Brodkaster sa Pilipinas. *Broadcast Media Yearbook '83*, p. 56 and Office of Media Affairs, *Philippine Media Profile, 1983*, p. 1.

9. The so-called alternative newspapers include: *Veritas*, *Mr. & Ms.*, *Pahayagang Malaya*, *The Guardian*, *People's Voice*, *Philippine Signs*, *The Manila Paper*, *La Solidaridad*, *Filipino Times*, and *Metro Kabayan*. Those that already ceased publication include the padlocked *Philippine Times*, *Pahayagang Libre*, and *Extra Philippines. Malaya*, which used to have only 10,000 average circulation before the Aquino assassination, has now a claimed circulation of about 50,000. Immediately after the Aquino event, its circulation went up to 200,000. From a weekly tabloid, *Malaya* is now a broadsheet newspaper, and comes out five times a week.

10. The dictum states that for every 100 persons there should be at least 10 copies of daily newspapers, 5 radio sets, 2 cinema seats and 2 television receivers.

understanding. However, these new technologies are criticized for having perpetuated imbalances and inequalities between urban and rural populations. Because they are concentrated in and at the command of only a few powerful corporate groups located in two or three advanced industrial countries, their data bases may include the biases, outlooks and interests of the groups that put them together. The problems of dependency and cultural erosion are the negative consequences of these technologies according to Schiller<sup>11</sup> and the MacBride Report.<sup>12</sup>

While the growth in communication resources in the Philippines is welcome, there is, however, a need for a planning framework which will provide guidelines and criteria on such concerns as appropriateness of technology, particularly in the light of development goals such as the preservation of cultural identity and self-reliance.

#### OWNERSHIP OF COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The ownership of communication technology in the Philippines is characterized by control by a few powerful vested interest groups. This oligopoly covers diverse activities, from ownership of traditional media such as press, radio-television, public relations, etc., to new media such as cable television, data bank, satellite, etc., and a "marriage of interest" between the government and the media owners. Such an ownership pattern makes it difficult for the communication technology to be socially representative of all interest groups — the minorities, labor, ethnic communities, workers, consumers, and the like. While there is plurality in the sources of information, the information tends to be uniform. Such a situation encouraged passivity, and the growing lack of faith in government spurred the growth of the alternative press.

11. Herbert Schiller, "One World: Marketplace for Transnational Corporations," in C.J. Hamelink, *Communication in the Eighties* (Rome: IDOC International, 1980), p. 55.

12. Sean MacBride, *Many Voices, One World* (London: Kogan Page, 1980), pp. 31-33.

## DISTRIBUTION OF COMMUNICATION RESOURCES

The pattern of growth of communication resources shows a tendency to concentrate in the urban areas. This disparity is shown in the following statistics: a) 66 percent of all nationwide publications are published in Metro Manila and are mostly in the English language; b) 16 percent of all radio stations are located in Metro Manila; c) all five television networks originate from Metro Manila; d) about 95 percent of all books other than textbooks are sold in the central region; e) most knowledge centers (research and technology generating institutions) are located in the urban areas; and f) the telephone density is 2.25 per 100 in Metro Manila while in the rural areas, it is only 0.24 per 100 inhabitants.<sup>13</sup>

In Southern Mindanao (Region XI), about 60 percent of radio stations are located in Davao City. The other stations are distributed in the capital towns of Davao del Sur, Surigao del Sur and South Cotabato. Davao Oriental, a province of about 350,000 people, does not have a single radio station, and only stations with powerful signals from nearby provinces are able to reach the province.<sup>14</sup> Yet it is this region where there is continuing political unrest that is in dire need of adequate information facilities.

The above clearly shows the nature of this imbalance. While Metro Manila and a few key cities have more information resources than needed, Philippine rural areas where approximately 68 percent of the population is located, suffer from information deprivation.

Unfortunately, such an information imbalance is accompanied by other forms of disparities. The Makati Business Club cites that a large segment of the country's population in the rural areas is short of the basic needs in life such as food, clothing, shelter and minimum education.<sup>15</sup> Most development efforts are centralized in big cities where social overhead capital formation is also concentrated.

13. "735,302 Phones All Over RP Today," *Bulletin Today*, 2 August 1983, p. 1.

14. A Survey of the Radio Listenership of the People in Davao Oriental. Conducted by the Research, Training and Development Division of the Office of Media Affairs, Region XI-Davao City, October-December 1982, p. 2.

15. "Philippine Growth and Development: Issues and Prescriptions, 1982." Working Document presented by the Makati Business Club, 28 August 1982, Appendix, p. 2.

The rural poor are often deprived of opportunities to express their opinions on national and local issues. Providing them access to communication media and a better chance for active participation can be an effective means of defusing frustrations and making them feel that they are truly participating in nation-building. The media will have to be restructured to make them more relevant to cultural goals. Although there are efforts towards presentation of development-oriented messages, Gresham's Law<sup>16</sup> applies to the situation so that it would take a strong political will and communication policies to achieve balance in media programming.

While communication media continue to alienate rural people from the national mainstream, the New People's Army and the dissident groups campaign with great intensity to win their hearts and minds. There is reason to believe that their communication tactics may be more effective than those of the government, for they have penetrated about 20 percent of the barangays and are now, according to a report, able to count on the support of some 180,000 civilians.<sup>17</sup>

But there is a growing clamor for changes that might lead to reduction of disparities and elitism. With the realization that win-lose strategies which emphasize competition and confrontation rather than cooperation may not be the best strategy for survival, conflict resolution has moved towards non-zero-sum strategies. The "zero-sum" or "win-lose" economic strategy is one where two players in conflict end up by one winning all the way. The "non-zero sum" strategy argues that one must allow the other to win a little. Thus, in the real world, the strategy is to share resources with others as this would in the long run redound to the benefit of all. There is increasing recognition by urban groups such as the business sector that the key to their survival is total development. This means strengthening of countryside institutions and sharing of resources both of which support the shift from the traditional zero-sum economic strategy.

16. The Law states that the bad drives out the good. Since the heavy volume of media fare can be described as trivial and anti-developmental, it follows that their potent force lies in sheer volume of space they occupy. (Gilbert Seldes, "The Public Arts" in B. Rosenberg and D. Manning White, *Mass Culture*, The Free Press), p. 558.

17. "Philippine Growth and Development: Issues and Prescriptions, 1982," Appendix, p. 4.



## CONTENT OF COMMUNICATION

The communication structure does reveal an imbalance between "hardware" (equipment, technical infrastructure) and "software" (trained personnel and appropriate strategies) to support a balanced development. Although we are witnessing the growth of an information society, we do not as yet see clear directions in Philippine national planning. The educational system has anchored its development on a vision of a society that is self-reliant, and towards this end, it emphasizes preservation of cultural values. The goals of achieving a balance between "learning to do" and "learning to be" (the former emphasizes skills and the latter attitudes and values) can be achieved not only through formal channels of education but also through learning at a distance by utilizing communication technology.

But the Philippine media do very little to reinforce our educational goals. There is considerable dependence on Western sources, and frequently they present distortions of reality and negative models. UNESCO estimated that 90 percent of the world's flow of news in words and pictures is in the hands of four agencies — Reuters, Associated Press (AP), United Press International and the Agence France Presse.<sup>18</sup> While many Third World countries depend on the "Big Four" and their affiliates, the CBS, ABC and NBC for our foreign news coverage, the latter are criticized for not providing satisfactory coverage in addition to partiality in the selection of news. Transnational news agencies have been shown to exaggerate or oversimplify social reality perhaps because of the Western and urban orientation of their news gatherers.

Communication media tend to provide greater coverage of crime and violence perhaps because they operate within the framework of newsworthiness. News to them is what would interest readers, increase circulation and attract more advertisers. Crime stories are so dramatized and sensationalized, that at times the media contributes to the hero-worship of criminals. An example is the case of "Ben Tumbling," once known as Metro Manila's public enemy no. 1. An afternoon tabloid ran a series of stories on how

18. Guy de Fontgalland, "Newspool: Background to the Controversy," in *Media Asia*, vol. 3, no. 3 (Singapore: Asian Mass Communication Research and Information Centre, 1976), p. 146.

Tumbling committed his crimes — how he eluded his pursuers and made the police force a laughing stock. The paper came up with a story justifying his acts. It said that police pushed Ben Tumbling to a life of crime. When the police authorities finally succeeded in gunning him down, the publicity of Tumbling stories became even more prominent. Thousands of curious people flocked to his wake. For them, he was a modern-day Robin Hood. "We cannot understand this instant fascination — why make a hero out of a criminal whose police records confirm the many crimes he reportedly committed?" asked a police officer.<sup>19</sup>

Photojournalists are guilty of sensationalism and dramatization of events. For example, during the critical period in Northern Ireland, foreign photographers intentionally "made-up" pictures by asking rioters to pose. One television crew even offered children five shillings for each plastic bullet fired at them by the security forces. Another photographer who stopped to film a burning barricade asked a six-year-old boy to pose in front of the flames.<sup>20</sup> During the media coverage of the assassination of former Senator Benigno Aquino, Jr., it was obvious that photojournalists of the establishment media tended to underplay the importance of the event. One cannot tell from the pictorials that there were actually thousands of mourners during the wake and burial. Such unethical practices of "creating" rather than "reporting" news are done because of fierce competition among news reporters and photographers. Mass media sometimes create a climate of fear. If the media have this power, according to the MacBride Report, why should they not exercise this same power in order to free men from distrust and fear and to assert their opposition to all forms of war and violence and to all recourse to force in international relations?<sup>21</sup> It is estimated that superpowers spend more than \$1 billion a day on weapons of destruction.<sup>22</sup> If only a portion of this amount were utilized for institutions that support peace!

Another issue concerns media coverage of women and other minority groups. During the 1979 Manila meeting among women leaders and journalists from five Asian countries on the topic,

19. Tuazon, Ramon R., et. al., *Course Guide in Development Journalism*, (Manila: Asian Institute of Journalism, 1983), p. 245.

20. A wire story from Reuters carried by the *Manila Daily Bulletin* on 14 May 1981.

21. MacBride, *Many Voices, One World*, p. 175.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 178.

"Women and the Press Encounter," the mass media were criticized for their portrayal of women according to certain stereotypes. According to studies conducted on Malaysian newspapers, many articles perpetuate the myth that women are merely interested in fashion, recipes, child care, shopping and other leisure activities. About five stories on men appear as against one on women and more column space is devoted to men. There is considerable coverage of women photographed with various parts of their body exposed which is not reflective of the manner of dressing of Malaysian women.<sup>23</sup> In Korea, women's affairs are not given as much space as those of men and media still persist in limiting their coverage of women to the women's pages. Likewise, articles on equality were found not to sell well in a male-dominated society like Korea.<sup>24</sup>

An example to show that mass media may at times support "oppressors" is provided by Manley who notes that public opinion was shaped by news-reporting against the "terrorists" (those who struggle for freedom through the use of arms because all peaceful avenues of change were blocked) who fought against apartheid in South Africa.<sup>25</sup>

Today we read about tribal wars and armed conflict between insurgents and the military, especially in areas like Northern Luzon and Mindanao. Media can play a significant role in solving centuries-old conflicts through objective presentation of these groups and by developing appreciation of each other's cultural traditions. Perhaps the most difficult challenge for the media today is the encouragement of cultural minorities to participate in national development efforts. In doing so, however, media must recognize cultural differences and preserve rather than threaten existing cultural values.

23. Hanima Dona Mustafa, "Women and the Press Encounter," a meeting sponsored by the Press Foundation of Asia, Manila, Philippines, 1979, p. 2.

24. Suh Young Hee, "Women and the Press Encounter," pp. 1-2.

A survey of Indian films conducted in 1977 found out that, out of forty-six women who appeared as characters, only twelve were employed and nine of them were in traditionally female jobs. A study in 1973 of fiction in Soviet magazines showed women confined to the domestic sphere, or as secretaries, assistants, and in similar role ancillary to those of men. Even in domestic and personal situations, women appear as incapable of making decisions without masculine guidance. See MacBride, *Many Voices, One World*, p. 190.

25. Michael Manley, "Muscle, Money and Mountebanks," in *South, The Third World Magazine*, March 1983, p. 45.

Last year, the Asian Institute of Journalism carried out a two-week monitoring survey (31 January to 13 February 1983) of the programs of all the television stations in Manila and a few other key cities in connection with a global research study sponsored by UNESCO. Some highlights of the study are the following:<sup>26</sup>

1. There are more locally produced television programs (58.84 percent) on prime time representing a little more than one-half of total program time. Ten years ago, when a similar survey was carried out, TV programming consisted more of imported fare.
2. Close to 90 percent of imported programs shown locally come from the United States.
3. 61.64 percent of prime time minutes consist of entertainment.
4. Cultural programs (5.66 percent), children's programs (2.55 percent), and religious programs (0.62 percent) take up the remaining prime time minutes.

*There were no educational programs during prime time.*<sup>27</sup>

The above shows that although more than half of Philippine TV programs are locally produced, a large percentage of them are entertainment programs. The dependence on the United States is not only seen in the 90 percent of total foreign programs emanating from that country but also in the influence of American programs in the development of format and content of local programming. Although the goal of our education system is to popularize local heroes and models for the young, the popular models continue to be Superman, Spiderman and other Western heroes.

All television stations in the provinces are merely relay stations. The four independent television stations are now affiliated with the big networks. This means that both the urban and rural populations are exposed to the same kind of media fare. Only 2.71 percent of total transmission time of the six provincial stations consists of local (provincial) programs which means that 97.29 percent originate from Metro Manila.<sup>28</sup> Most of these local programs are news and public affairs but they only represent a small per-

26. A Study on Flow of Television Programmes and News in the Philippines. Executive Summary. (Manila: Asian Institute of Journalism, May 1983).

27. Prime time was set from 6:00 to 10:30 p.m. It is interesting to note that an EDPIATF (Educational Development Projects Implementing Task Force) study in 1977 showed that during the year, 80 percent of TV time consisted of imported programs.

28. A Study on Flow of Television Programmes and News in the Philippines, p. 41.

centage of total programming.

The implications of the data on provincial television stations are:

1. There is limited exchange of television programs among the various regions thereby encouraging dependence on Manila programs.
2. Local residents have limited exposure to programs produced locally. Local community resources (talents, materials, etc.) are underutilized.
3. The potential of television as a channel for feedback in the region is limited.

The exposure of urban and rural people to commercials has also affected their buying and consumption habits. Although a large percentage of television commercials are domestically produced, a majority generate awareness and promote products of transnational brands. Likewise, most local commercials are produced by subsidiaries of multinational industries. The concepts and messages are of Western orientation and may therefore promote a consumer rather than a producer-oriented society. The portrayal of consumption patterns of the rich can only contribute to fanning discontent among the less fortunate. This condition supports a popular observation that the media have contributed to "rising" expectations which often result in "rising frustrations" because of the inability of the national economy to supply the demands for goods and services.

A more serious concern is the effect of television programs and advertisements on children. A US study entitled: "Television and Behavior: Ten Years of Scientific Progress and Implications for the Eighties,"<sup>29</sup> revealed that violence in television leads to aggressive behavior among American children. In 1980, the International Advertising Agency chapter in the Philippines conducted a study on Filipino children whose ages ranged from four to thirteen. The findings support the belief that media have an important role in the socialization process:<sup>30</sup> a) Children between the ages of four

29. Boddewyn, J.J., "Advertising to Children: An International Survey," a report prepared for the International Advertising Association, Inc. September 1979, p. 2.

30. Tiongson, Patty L., *Summary of Transcript of Proceedings during the Asian Federation of Advertising Association (AFAA) Forum on Advertising and TV Programming for Children*, 28 February 1980, pp. 2-3.

to six remember images seen on the mass media; they have a good recall of commercials especially jingles, cartoons and animations; b) Adolescents acquire consumer-oriented attitudes from television advertising.

A study by Magda Amer also showed that violence on TV programs may have negative effects as perceived by respondents consisting of 100 youths between 16 to 26 years old in Metro Manila. The influence of the TV programs which were chosen because they contained "violent" content can be shown by the fact that 70 percent watch these programs regularly and that TV viewing ranked number one among their choices of out-of-school activities.<sup>31</sup>

A content analysis of *Bulletin Today*,<sup>32</sup> the country's most widely circulated newspaper, (and also considered the more objective of the big three dailies) revealed that in its front page, the top five news categories in newsspace content per column inches were *economy* (328.15 column inches or 25.10 percent), *opposition personality*, i.e., Benigno Aquino, Jr., (288.87 column inches or 22.10 percent), *crime and violence* (139.30 column inches or 10.65 percent), *other social problems* e.g., pollution, garbage, traffic, population, etc. (132 column inches or 10.10 percent) and *infrastructure* (98.72 column inches or 7.55 percent).<sup>33</sup> The sample was chosen from dailies published in August 1983.

Since the country is going through an economic crisis which was triggered off by the assassination of Aquino, it is understandable that these two categories predominate in news coverage. But the prominence of crime in the front page does indicate the preoccupation with violence. Sports news appeared to be a popular category as shown in a 1980 study of eight daily newspapers where 17 percent of newsspace content consisted of sports news.<sup>34</sup> What is more noteworthy is what the newspapers and other media do not publish. The recent study on media autonomy has shown that jour-

31. Magda Amer, "A Study of the Effects of Televised Violence on Filipino Youth" (M.M. Thesis, Asian Institute of Journalism, 1984), Summary.

32. Autonomy and Independence of Print Media in the Philippines: *Bulletin Today: A Case Study* (Manila: Asian Institute of Journalism, February 1984), p. 99.

33. Other categories in the front page section include: *politics* (6.67 percent), *defense and security* (6.10 percent), *miscellaneous* including weather and sweepstakes winner (5.32 percent), *education, health and sports* (3.16 percent), *accidents and disasters* (2.72 percent) and *cultural events* (0.54 percent).

34. *Newsspace Content*. Asian Institute of Journalism Library Vertical File.

nalists tend to exercise self-censorship particularly on controversial issues.<sup>35</sup>

#### COMMUNICATION PROCESSES

The more important considerations however are the present communication processes operating in the Philippines.

Consider the following problems.

The authoritarian model<sup>36</sup> guiding the conduct of our communication system has hampered the participation of a broader sector of the population in such aspects as programming, production, and the sharing of individual or collective opinions. Secondly, the present feedback mechanisms in Philippine mass media are inadequate. Letters to the editor or broadcast feedback obtained through taglines or "phone-in" comments do not normally provide adequate space or time to elicit well thought-out viewpoints. It is generally known that many letters to the editors are censored or are not provided space especially if they offend "sacred cows." The latter include the First Family, members of the military and matters involving "national security." Interactive mechanisms which provide forums for continuing dialogue among the people and between the people and the government are few and far between. The President goes on the air several times a year when he "dialogues" with members of the media and leaders of public and private organizations via domestic satellite. But again, many of those who participate in the dialogue are linked to pro-establishment interests.

Thirdly, existing community organizations do not have the type of leadership needed for sustained community mobilization. While we speak of the need for a countervailing force which would involve mass-based organizations such as labor, farmer's and consumer's groups, the latter appear to suffer from problems of commitment and other organizational problems. At the same time, the

35. Autonomy and Independence of Print Media in the Philippines: Bulletin Today, A Case Study, p. 35.

36. Siebert describes four models namely, the Authoritarian, the Soviet Communist, the Social Responsibility, and the Libertarian. In the Authoritarian model, truth was conceived to be, not the product of the great mass of people but of a few wise men who were in a position to guide and direct their fellows. Fred D. Siebert, Theodore Peterson and Wilbur Schramm, *Four Theories of the Press* (Chicago, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1963) pp. 9-37.

credibility of public organizations and officers of government as catalysts of change is at a low point. The lack of a national ideology which could provide the unifying element in all these development efforts is a principal reason for fragmentation and apathy. There has been a social and political awakening however following the assassination of Aquino. While mass protests have primarily involved the center and its urban-based organizations, there is an increasing "trickle-down" to the other regions. The protests which have utilized communication symbols (confetti, yellow ribbons), the rally and lobby should move to political and economic issues that go beyond the present political actors and their adversaries. It will be interesting to observe how the alternative press, "xerox journalism" and the "betamax" are being utilized to increase political awareness and whether these tools can be effective agents for change.

Finally, the absence of a comprehensive communication policy has rendered policy development a sectoral effort with print, broadcast, advertising and film media, each having its own code of ethics which is not integrated with the others. The provisions of these codes are usually couched in general terms so that they have allowed infractions by unethical operators and sponsors. Existing media laws emphasize negative sanctions such as do's and don'ts on content (libel, sex, violence). Development goals are stated very generally, and positive sanctions such as allocation of adequate time and space or rewards for programs focusing on development themes have yet to be articulated in existing codes of ethics.

The existing regulatory agencies—Kapisanan ng Brodkasters sa Pilipinas or KBP (broadcast), Board of Censors for Motion Pictures (films), Philippine Board of Advertising and the Publishers Association of the Philippines, Inc. (print) have failed to enforce regulations and ensure adherence to the provisions in the codes. A frequent violation on television concerns commercial minutes. The KBP ruling states that the commercial load for TV in Metro Manila shall not exceed fourteen minutes on foreign produced programs and fifteen minutes on locally produced programs per clock hour. A survey of thirty-five prime time and noon time shows however revealed that 77 percent of these programs violated the provision, some by as much as 50 percent. ("Discorama" went beyond the limit by 58 percent, "Chicks to Chicks" by 53 percent,



"John en Marsha" 51 percent, "The Price is Right" by 47 percent, etc.).<sup>37</sup>

Such violations exist because as the KBP authorities state, the organization has insufficient funds for a monitoring group that could see to it that the code is enforced. In view of this, it may be feasible to have an "ombudsman" for all media which also assume the responsibility of monitoring performance and ensuring the maintenance of standards.

There are also practices in information gathering, processing and delivery which have perpetuated imbalance and the one-way flow of information. These include the selection of events which agree with a given cultural-ideological structure. Often, superficial events are made to surface as news while issues linked to social and technological development and participation of minority groups are rarely covered in the news. Events happening in central or urban areas are considered to be more important than those happening in the periphery. Journalists and information personnel are more concerned with explaining, getting the message across, and translating information rather than encouraging people's access to and participation in the media, and eliciting their critical comments.

#### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This article has examined the communication structure, the nature of ownership, distribution and reach of communication technology, content, and communication processes as they contribute to dialogue and peace in the Philippines. Constraints in forms of domination of media resources by vested interest groups, the authoritarian state which hampers the restructuring of institutions and practices which would make the communication system more socially representative have been pointed out. The new order which supports equitable distribution of resources, a freer, more dialogic and horizontal flow of communication, and an indigenous-based communication system can only be brought about through the mobilization of grassroots organizations. An increase in the quantity of media resources or in the frequency of exchange between individuals and among groups is not sufficient to bring

37. Sicam, Edmund, "Shows Exceed Time Limit for Commercials," *Times Journal*, 4 December 1982, p. 13.

about peace and understanding. It is the quality of the communication process and partnership characterized by mutuality, trust and sharing that is able to contribute to a more meaningful relationship between people.

A resolution of the UNESCO General Conference on Culture and Communication noted the "role that can and should be assigned to communication in awakening the conscience of, and sensitizing public opinion to the major problems confronting the world and to their indivisible and global character, and in helping towards their solution."<sup>38</sup> The UNESCO Media Declaration also noted that "the strengthening of peace and international understanding, the promotion of human rights and the countering of racialism, apartheid and incitement to war demand a free flow and a wider, and better balanced dissemination of information."<sup>39</sup> Sean MacBride, who won the Nobel and International Lenin Peace Prize, notes the role of the mass media and non-government voluntary organizations in influencing events.<sup>40</sup> He cites Amnesty International and the International Commission of Jurists as two of these associations which have played an important role in alerting public opinion because they have both independence and idealism.

In the Philippines, the operationalization of constitutional provisions on the public's right to information is an area of concern as there have been considerable violations of these rights in the recent past. Communication is perhaps the most important alternative resource in achieving the goals of peace through dialogue. Providing people with information so that they can begin to feel a sense of self-worth, and increasing channels for dialogue with other individuals and groups, as well as mechanisms for their participation in decision-making may in the end be the more viable strategy towards the survival of mankind.

38. Article Three of the Declaration of Fundamental Principles Concerning the Contribution of the Mass Media to Strengthening Peace and International Understanding, to the Promotion of Human Rights and to Countering Racialism, Apartheid and Incitement to War. Adopted on 22 November 1978 at the 20th Session of the General Conference of UNESCO, Paris.

39. Article One of the Declaration of Fundamental Principles Concerning the Contribution of the Mass Media to Strengthening Peace and International Understanding, to the Promotion of Human Rights and to Countering Racialism, Apartheid and Incitement to War. Adopted on 22 November 1978 at the 20th Session of the General Conference of UNESCO, Paris.

40. Sean MacBride, "The Desperate Imperative," *Journal of the World Association for Christian Communication* 30 (1983): 3.