

DEMOCRACY AND THE MEDIA IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

- A CASE STUDY OF THE PHILIPPINES.

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the relationships between the Philippine media, class power and the state. It focusses particularly on the economic and political actors and agencies, including the press, which have promoted or hindered democratisation in the Philippines during the decade 1983-1993. It argues that although the role of the Philippine press has been considerable, it has been inextricably bound to the interests of ruling elites who have disproportionate control over mainstream media agendas.

To explain this dominance, the study analyses some of the forces within the Philippine state which historically have shaped this Third World country's economy and polity. The thesis then examines how the role of the Philippine media, in particular the mainstream English-language press, developed through the "liberalisation" phase of the Marcos era and the subsequent periods of "democratic transition" and "consolidation" associated with the Aquino and Ramos administrations. It highlights the pressures on the media that have often promoted sectional class interests, including those of media owners, at the expense of the plurality and accountability required for substantive democracy. However it also considers in detail the conduits within the "public sphere" for oppositional and "alternative" voices which have challenged the *status quo*, and it examines their role in articulating calls for political change during the Marcos and Aquino administrations.

The Manila press is contrasted with regional and "alternative" news sources, in a debate on the need for media strategies to represent agendas of the marginalised sectors of Philippine society. The study analyses press reporting of two indices of "democratic debate" during the Aquino presidency: the issues of land reform and human rights abuses. The role of media practitioners and the tensions caused by conflicting demands of ownership, control and agenda-setting in this period of political turbulence are also examined. "Pluralist", "hegemonic", "gatekeeper" and "propaganda" models of the "Western liberal democratic" media are reviewed and tested in an attempt to refine theory in the context of empirical evidence.

The claims for the Philippine media's role in the country's democratisation are finally assessed. The "freest press in Asia" is reevaluated in relation to the economic and political interests it serves within the country's polity. The thesis argues that in particular circumstances - notably those of regime crisis - "spaces" may be created in the media through political contestation and mobilisation. Marginalised voices and agendas may then be heard in the "public sphere", though with difficulty. These articulations are, however, relatively temporary and insecure, and encounter many obstacles from the powerful vested media interests of elite actors and agencies. The thesis questions, moreover, to what extent elites actually *act* upon these marginalised agendas, even when they can be articulated, in a "developing country" like the Philippines. The media are ultimately never independent of the elites who control them economically and politically: their potential role in democratisation is severely constrained by powerful social forces within the Third World state which seek to manipulate them for narrow class interests.

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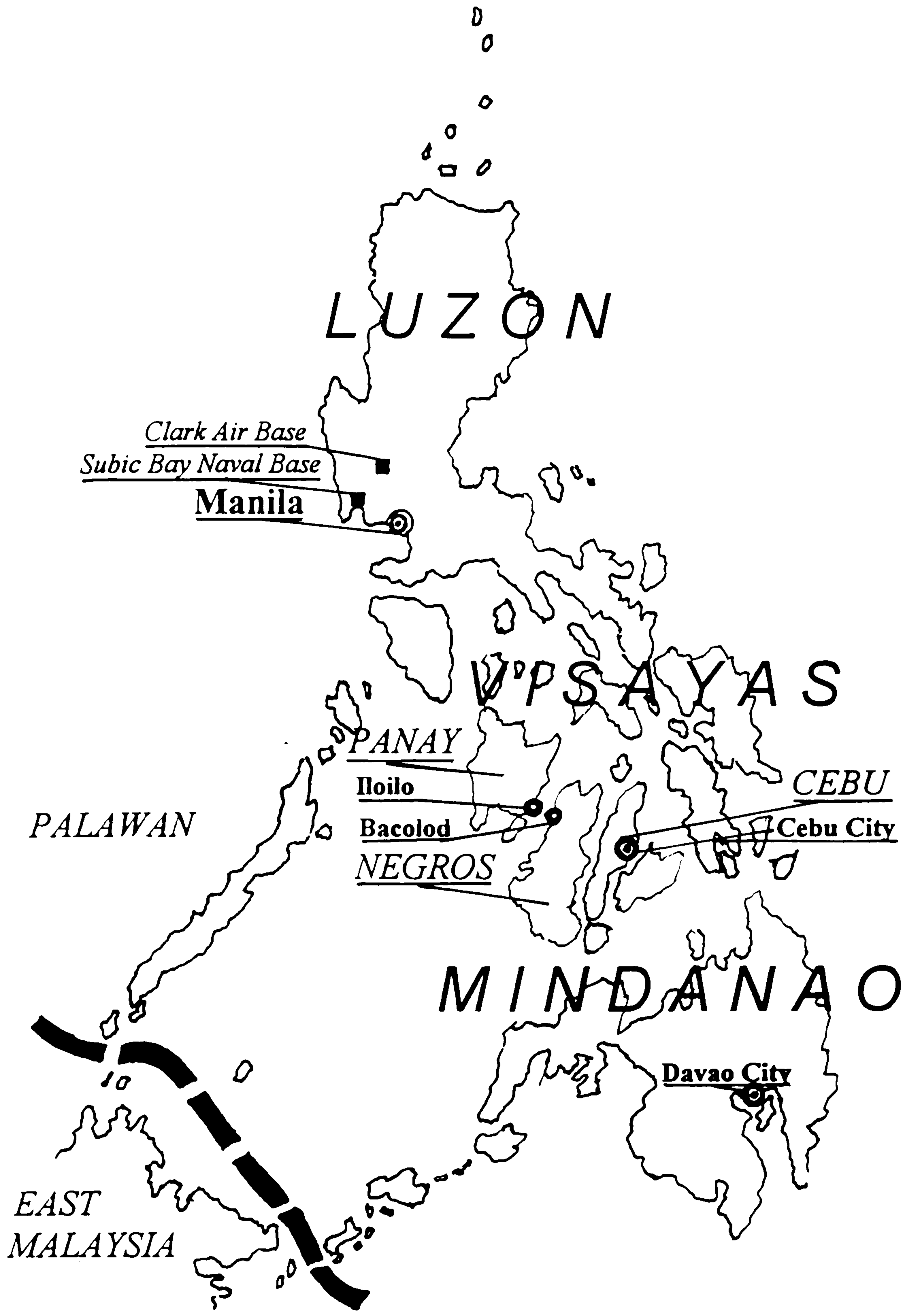
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GLOSSARY: ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

(Newspapers and periodicals in bold italics; Pilipino and Spanish words underlined; English translations in inverted commas)

ABS-CBN	- Alto Broadcasting System - Chronicle Broadcasting Network.
ADB	- Asian Development Bank.
AFP	- Armed Forces of the Philippines.
<u>Alsa Masa</u>	- "Masses Rising" (vigilante group).
ANP	- Alliance for New Politics.
ARADO	- Agrarian Reform Alliance of Democratic Organisations
ASEAN	- Association of Southeast Asian Nations.
BANDILA	- <u>Bansang Nagkaisa sa Diwa at Layunin</u> , a socdem coalition.
<u>barangay</u>	- "local community; parish": the smallest local administrative unit.
<u>barrio</u>	- "district; quarter" (Spanish); often used interchangeably with <u>barangay</u> .
BAYAN	- <u>Bagong Alyangang Makabayan</u> ("New Patriotic Alliance"), a natdem coalition.
BISIG	- <u>Bukluran sa Ikaunlad ng Sosyalistang Isip at Gawa</u> ("Movement for the Advancement of Socialist Ideas and Action"), a socdem coalition.
<u>cacique</u>	- "local [political] boss" (Spanish).
CAFGU	- Civilian Armed Forces Geographical Unit.
CARL	- Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law.
CARP	- Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program [sic].
CBCP	- Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines.
CHDF	- Civilian Home Defence Forces (Marcos era).
CNL	- Christians for National Liberation.
CNF	- Cordillera News and Features (alternative news agency, Baguio).
COBRA}	- Correspondents' and Broadcasters' Association /
-ANS }	- Action News Service (alternative news agency, Bacolod).
COMELEC	- Commission on Elections.
CORD	- Coalition of Organizations for the Restoration of Democracy.
CPAR	- Congress for a People's Agrarian Reform.
CPI	- Crossroads Publications Inc.
CPP	- Communist Party of the Philippines (established 1968).
DAR	- Department of Agrarian Reform.
DENR	- Department of Environment and Natural Resources.
EDSA	- Epifanio de los Santos Avenue.
EOI	- Export-Oriented Industrialisation
EPZ	- Export Processing Zone.
<u>estafa</u>	- "petty fraud; swindling" (Spanish).
FDC	- Freedom from Debt Coalition.
<i>FEER</i>	- <i>Far Eastern Economic Review</i> .
FGT	- Food and General Trades [Union], amalgamated with NFSW.
FINS	- Federation of Independent News Services.
GDP	- Gross Domestic Product.
GNP	- Gross National Product.
HMB	- <u>Hukbong Mapagpalaya ng Bayan</u> ("People's Liberation Army).
<u>Huk</u>	- <u>Hukbo ng Bayan Laban sa Hapon</u> ("People's Army to Fight the Japanese"). Revived post-war as HMB.
IMF	- International Monetary Fund.
IMR	- Infant Mortality Rate.
ISI	- Import-Substitution Industrialisation
JAJA	- Justice for Aquino, Justice for All (anti-Marcos alliance, established after Aquino assassination).

- KAAKBAY** - Kilusang Kapangyarihan at Karapatan ng Bayan. ("Movement for the Power and Rights of the Nation"). A nationalist anti-Marcos organisation led by the human rights lawyer, Jose Diokno.
- KBL** - Kilusang Bagong Lipunan ("New Society Movement"). Marcos's party.
- KMP** - Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas ("Peasant Movement of the Philippines").
- KMU** - Kilusang Mayo Uno ("May First Movement"). Left-wing Trade Union alliance.
- LABAN** - Lakas ng Bayan ("Power of the People"). The party of Ninoy and Cory Aquino.
- LDP** - Lakas ng Demokratikong Pilipinas ("Strength of Philippine Democracy").
- libdems** - liberal democrats.
- lider** - local [political] low-ranking leader.
- MAN** - Movement for the Advancement of Nationalism.
- MC** - *Manila Chronicle*.
- Meralco** - Manila Electric Company. Owned by Lopez clan.
- MILF** - Moro Islamic Liberation Front.
- MNLF** - Moro National Liberation Front.
- MNC** - multinational corporation.
- MT** - *Manila Times*.
- NAMFREL** - National Movement for Free Elections.
- NASSA** - National Secretariat for Social Action.
- natdems** - national democrats (radical left-wing political movement, led by CPP and NDF).
- NCR** - National Capital Region.
- NDF** - National Democratic Front
- NEDA** - National Economic Development Authority.
- NFSW** - National Federation of Sugar Workers (amalgamated with FGT).
- NIC** - Newly Industrialising Country.
- NORDIS** - Northern Dispatch (alternative news agency, Baguio).
- NPA** - New People's Army.
- O/I** - Original Interview.
- PAHRA** - Philippine Alliance of Human Rights Advocates.
- PC** - Philippine Constabulary.
- PDI** - *Philippine Daily Inquirer*.
- PDP** - Partido Demokratiko Pilipinas (= "Philippine Democratic Party"). Largest socdem party; merged with Laban to form PDP-Laban.
- PJR** - *Philippine Journalism Review*.
- PKP** - Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas (= "Philippine Communist Party"). Original party, established 1920s.
- PLDT** - Philippine Long Distance Telephone Company.
- PnB** - Partido ng Bayan ("People's Party"). Natdem party alliance, formed to contest 1987 elections.
- PNA** - Philippine News Agency (state-run news agency, Manila).
- PNF** - Philippine News and Features (alternative news agency, Manila).
- PPI** - Philippine Press Institute.
- PTJ** - *Philippine Times Journal*.
- RP** - Republic of the Philippines.
- SAPs** - Structural Adjustment Programmes (advocated by the IMF-World Bank).
- socdems** - social democrats.
- Tadtad** - "Chopchop" (vigilante group).
- TFD** - Task Force Detainees.
- UP** - University of the Philippines.
- UNIDO** - United Nationalist Democratic Opposition.
- welgang bayan** - "national or people's [general] strike".



Map of the Philippines

1. CHAPTER ONE. A TESTING DECADE FOR DEMOCRACY

1.1. Introduction: the "Road to Democracy"?

In little more than a decade the Philippines underwent a number of political transformations which appeared to move the country firmly away from authoritarianism and onto the "road to democracy". After a period of intense political repression in the 1970s the country experienced pressures towards "liberalisation" in the early 1980s, which culminated in the so-called "People Power Revolution"¹ of 1986. Celebrated by both international and local media, this virtually bloodless revolt succeeded in deposing the dictator Ferdinand Marcos and ushering in the supposedly "democratic" regime of Corazon Aquino. This "democratic transition" has subsequently been "consolidated", according to certain accounts (Parrenas, 1993), by the peaceful transfer of power to the regime of President Ramos following the 1992 elections.

Descriptions of the political forces and processes which gave rise to these events provide useful material against which to test recent theories of democratisation in a Third World setting. The choice of the Philippines is particularly apposite since, aside from the authoritarian Marcos period of Martial Law (1972-81) and its aftermath, the Philippines has been described as one of the "most democratic" countries, with "one of the freest presses", in Asia (Agpalo, 1981; Burley, 1973; Lande, 1986; Lent, 1970; 1972; Rosenberg, 1972, 1973; Wurfel, 1988). Thus a study of this country's political transformations over the last three decades, and the media's role in them, may furnish evidence of the historical conjunctures which encourage or discourage authoritarianism or democracy.

This thesis examines the changing roles of the Philippine media as one among several political forces acting in the processes of "liberalisation", "democratic transition" and "consolidation". It analyses these roles in particular during the politically turbulent period from 1981 to 1993; and it sets them in the wider historical context of Philippine twentieth century political and economic development. The study will question whose interests and agendas the media have served during this period of fluid political alliances, conflicts and mobilisations; how effectively the media have performed their allotted roles as watchdogs of public accountability, and as conduits of information and public opinion; and to what extent these roles have contributed to democratisation. The focus is on the English-language media in general and on the print media in particular, as "opinion formers" in the "public sphere".

In addition to "mainstream" media such as the daily metropolitan presses, the study will consider examples of regional presses. Beyond them, it will also survey separately some periodicals of the so-called "micro" or "group" media, including newsletters, informational pamphlets and wallsheets, and

"alternative" news channels such as non-governmental news agencies. Many of these sources have been associated with NGOs, people's organisations, and religious, labour and other cause-oriented groups. Although their direct readership and individual news contributions have invariably been limited, these sources have often provided, via their access to certain mainstream press outlets, an alternative "voice" to official and elite sources of information at-the-centre. They have contributed significantly to democratic debate in the Philippines over the past decade, not least by drawing attention to the political and social agendas of those who tend to be marginalised geographically and politically by the "Manila-centric" elite. Collectively they have often been referred to as "alternative" media.

The model for the current alternative media sector was provided by the alternative presses which burgeoned, mostly in Manila, during the "liberalisation period" in the first half of the 1980s. Collectively dubbed the "mosquito" press, they provided readers with unofficial reports and oppositional critiques of the Marcos government's policies at a time of onerous censorship. Their contribution to the democratisation process was considerable; they will be considered separately in Chapter Six.

The study examines the more general proposition that segments of the Philippine media have played a significant role in political change in the country, by mediating public debate around certain key issues. However it will question whether the Philippine media *as a whole* have acted as "defenders of democracy" (see, for example, Group Media Journal, 1986; Maramba, 1986). The thesis focusses on the *distinctive* roles played by mainstream, opposition and alternative media voices at crucial periods during the transition from authoritarianism to the formal "return to democracy". It will also consider some of the constraints, both political and economic, on media publications and media practitioners during the period in question, in order to illuminate more general interactions between the media and other social, economic and political agents and institutions. Various hypotheses about the media, their economic structures and political effects, their relationship to elites, their agendas and political interests, will be examined in the light of this evidence.

1.2. Conflicting Expectations of Third World Media

The modern mass media are recognised as potentially powerful "conduits" of public opinion and "watchdogs" of public probity. Certain commentators suggest that they *could* contribute to the "public sphere" in modern and "modernising" states by providing citizens with a serious forum in which to debate those substantive issues which most affect them (see, for example, Habermas, 1962; Murdock, 1992).

However the media are also susceptible to social and political actors and agencies who seek to manipulate and control them (see, for example, Herman and Chomsky, 1988). Third World governments in particular frequently appear anxious to harness the "power of the press". Journalists are exhorted to work

towards "national unity", to respect "national security" and to eulogise government "development projects"; conversely they are expected to downplay negative criticism of the government and its supporters, and of "sensitive issues"². The ideal media in such a formulation are *not* encouraged to hold the state's public servants and private overlords to account; rather, they should become a "development tool" of government, articulating the "common goals" of "national economic development" (Pye, 1963; Schramm, 1964; Kausikan, 1993).

The tension between these mutually conflicting views of the media's place in civil society - as "watchdog" of ruling elites, or their mouthpiece - is often at the heart of attempts to defend, or gag, "press freedom". Can the media realistically be expected to "defend democracy", or are they simply one arm of Althusser's Ideological State Apparatuses, manipulating audiences and public opinion even as they themselves are constrained by hegemonic forces (Althusser, 1969)? Can the media, in other words, ever act with "relative autonomy" from elite and state interests, and if so, under what circumstances? In whose differing *class interests* do the personnel at various levels within media hierarchies act? What effect, if any, do the media have on political and economic processes in developing countries?

The constraints and pressures which affect the freedom of the press in a country like the Philippines can often be similar to those in the West. They include: the increasing concentration of media ownership and control, and the impact this may have on editorial functions; the struggle for financial viability, particularly of smaller, would-be "independent" media outlets; the often covert influence of advertisers, business and elite interests on media agendas; and the increasing domination by multinational corporations (MNCs) of certain sectors of information technology, telecommunications and advertising (Sussman, 1991b). In developing countries like the Philippines, however, the processes of opinion formation are frequently less mediated by the rhetoric of "liberal bourgeois democracy". Processes of hegemonic manipulation, control and influence often become more exposed to view and this may, for study purposes, make possible a clearer delineation of the contesting forces in operation.

The value of this present study, therefore, may in part be to highlight media processes which can be demonstrated to serve only narrow economic and political interests, but which in the West often masquerade as operating "in the public interest". The thesis may also contribute to debates about the viability of "liberal democratic" values in situations where, for historical reasons, economic and political viability is structurally fragile. Third World media are, for example, often subjected to robust interventions from the state or from private elites. These happen not only in periods of crisis, which might be expected; they also occur routinely as crude attempts to distort or suppress the truth for personal or corporate gain.

Direct and indirect "persuasion" and manipulation by the state, its agents, and large Western private corporations - through agenda-setting, sourcing, resourcing and gatekeeping, for example - has been described and theorised in a number of critical accounts of Western media (see, for example, Murdock,

1982; Chomsky, 1985; Herman, 1986; Parenti, 1986; Golding, 1989; Murdock and Golding, 1989). However, direct coercion - that is, physical and/or legalistic intimidation against individual media institutions and their practitioners, by private elite forces or by the state itself - has also been widespread in Third World countries like the Philippines, and is likely to increase during periods of rising political tension (Reyes, 1992). It can understandably create a climate of insecurity and fear among media practitioners, and this may have a severely inhibiting effect on their willingness to perform their "watchdog" and "conduit" roles, particularly in checking the accountability of coercive military and paramilitary forces. Yet without such basic accountability, democracy by any definition can scarcely be claimed to exist.

One significant focus of this thesis will therefore be the Philippine media's reporting of human rights abuses. Such abuses can in themselves be regarded as an index of acute political and social tensions. The Philippine media's varying attention to them will therefore be analysed in the light of those parallel political developments which have given rise to particular social and political conflicts. The effect these media reports, or the absence of them, may have had on processes of democratisation will be examined.

Human rights abuses are themselves a direct challenge - and open affront - to democratic processes, because they signal the exclusion of alternative political debate in favour of coercion by the state and its elites (including, of course, both military *and* paramilitary forces). If even *discussion* of the abuses are also curtailed in the media, democratisation is therefore doubly impaired - first by coercion, and then by exclusion. The reporting of human rights abuses in the Philippines, during the extended decade covering both the Marcos and Aquino eras, is thus for this thesis one of the touchstones of "substantive democratisation". Before settling on this particular focus, however, the thesis will analyse the forces which have produced the tensions, historically, within Philippine economic, political and social structures which have, in turn, led to such abuses.

1.3. Research Methods; Scope and Limitations of Study

Certain of the claims made for the Philippine media's role in the country's "democratisation process" were examined for this thesis using a methodology which allowed for historical cross-checking from both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources included contemporary documents, with a particular focus on contemporary records in the print media; their provenance is referred to directly within the main text (rather than in the bibliography, which focusses on secondary texts).

Field work for the study was conducted in the Philippines between January and May 1993. This included work in Manila, and a period of six weeks in the Visayas (Panay, Negros and Cebu) and in Mountain Province in northern Luzon - all provinces which have experienced political conflict and turbulence over extended periods. Interviews were undertaken with a number of key media, political and social actors

who had played significant roles in the reporting and dissemination of democratic debate in the Philippines over the previous decade and a half; and with others who had become active media professionals during that period. They ranged from editors, columnists, reporters and media critics, through to media owners, publishers, and broadcasting executives (see Appendix).

Detailed case studies based on some of these interviews have been used to illustrate the major themes of the thesis: the cases range from the histories of selected periodicals and news agencies, through to media coverage of significant political issues and the experiences of media practitioners working on them. The accounts of the latter - of their economic and political activities, journalistic opinions and media reports - were obtained using semi-structured interview techniques which allowed the respondents "space" to highlight what *they* felt were significant features of their narratives. These accounts were then carefully scrutinised and checked, factually, both against other interviews and against detailed analyses of archival material from contemporary print and broadcast media reports and other sources such as official documents. These were further referenced by interviews with media academics; with personnel from NGOs and People's Organisations (POs) who were working in areas of civil and human rights; and with political, labour, social and church activists working with marginalised social groups.

An investigative approach was adopted to check certain assertions which were otherwise difficult to verify. For example, an assertion often repeated to me in interview was that Philippine media interest in reporting human rights abuses in the country had declined after the Marcos period. This would clearly have been difficult to verify as a lone researcher. Instead I decided to check by direct personal experience a parallel phenomenon: the media's alleged lack of interest in the vexed question, then current (in 1993), of the fate of political prisoners. This allegation was made to me separately by concerned journalists working for liberal Manila dailies, by the editors of "alternative" news agencies and their investigative reporters in Manila and the provinces, and by senior officers of Task Force Detainees (TFD)³, the human rights monitoring organisation sponsored by church cause-oriented groups.

This focussed allegation was fortunately much more easily verifiable, as a specific index of media performance and attitudes, than the broader claim about "press apathy" regarding human rights issues in general. In the company of TFD personnel I visited Muntinlupa Penitentiary, Luzon's top security prison, for a press conference called by TFD to highlight the continuing anomalous detention of Jaime Tadeo, the KMP⁴ leader, together with other political activists who had challenged the Aquino regime, and yet others who were still held over from the Marcos period. I carefully monitored the media response. In spite of invitations to all the major Manila print and broadcast media, and the dutiful appearance of a handful of their journalists, reports of the press conference only appeared - as very minor items - in two mainstream dailies.

General human rights abuses were obviously more difficult to verify, but I was able personally to confirm the continued activity of the military and CAFGUs (see Glossary, and Chapter Nine) against

peasant activists in the Visayas and Mountain Province on four separate occasions. I saw semi-covert military bases and installations in both Panay and Negros and heard direct, verifiable accounts from farmers and journalists who had been harassed by the military and CAFGUs. I also encountered armed CAFGUs still operating in remote villages I visited on Panay island and saw their armed camps on Negros. In Mountain Province I encountered the petty harassment by the military of ethnic minorities.

Although much of this evidence might, if taken separately, be dismissed as anecdotal, cumulatively it endorsed a well-documented body of hard evidence, from organisations like Amnesty International and the New York-based Lawyers Committee for International Human Rights, through to respected international academics and Filipino journalists (see, for example, Amnesty International, 1987, 1988; Cadagat, 1988; CIIR, 1989; Clark, 1987; Delacruz, 1987; Lawyers Committee for International Human Rights, 1983, 1988; Reyes, 1992). This evidence collectively stressed that human rights abuses had in fact *increased* after the fall of Marcos, in the period of so-called "democratic transition" exemplified by the Aquino regime.

This is a significant finding for the state of democratisation in the post-Marcos Philippines. It is emphasised throughout this thesis, and particularly in Chapter Nine, as an indicator of wider issues: the "space" available for democratic debate about political conflict, in the media and elsewhere, in a society dominated by a narrow band of economic and social interests, whose control of the country's polity remains overwhelming.

However, the study does not confine itself to the issues surrounding human rights; it broadens into an examination of the political and economic forces and constraints on media practitioners - from reporters, columnists and investigative journalists, through to editors and media owners themselves. It analyses the differential access to the media by social groups and interests, and particularly the struggles by marginalised voices to gain access previously denied them. It examines media agendas and who sets them. It considers the ways in which media roles have changed, particularly as political and economic conditions for publishing have developed with regime changes; and the relationship between media reporting and political outcomes, or lack of them.

The study has several limitations. Most significantly, little consideration has been given to "media effects" *per se*; they have been considered only in relation to political outcomes. Thus no enquiry was made into how news reports were *received* by media audiences during the period in question, and no original primary research was undertaken using statistical survey techniques. Such research has been utilised only where it already existed as a secondary source - for example, as data within unpublished academic theses at the College of Mass Communications, University of the Philippines, to which I was kindly given access.

Neither does the study examine in any great depth the other major mass media forms apart from print, namely the broadcast media. Since the prime focus of the thesis is on the workings and interactions of media and direct political themes like class and state, I confined my research *in the main* to the branch of the Philippine media which records the country's political events, news and current affairs most intensively (in analytical depth) and extensively (geographically and thematically) - namely the English-speaking broadsheet press.

This selectivity is further justified, I believe, by the fact that the broadcast media were far more slavish than the press, throughout the Marcos period, in their observation of governmental edicts regarding the boundaries of permissible material. Conversely, given the exclusive adherence to the US model of broadcasting in the Philippines, public service broadcasting has not yet been established as a benchmark within the "public sphere"; consequently the broadcast media's "watchdog" role has been very weakly exercised, under authoritarian and liberal regimes alike. Only the celebrated role of the Catholic station, Radio Veritas, in the events surrounding Marcos's fall, have therefore been considered in any detail in my study.

In summary this thesis examines the Philippine English-language print media - mainstream and "alternative", metropolitan and regional - as potential indicators of democratisation during the period 1981-93. These indicators are measured by:

- (a) their roles during key political events and processes;
- (b) the diversity and depth of their representation of marginalised voices and agendas;
- (c) the effectiveness of the media's "watchdog" role in investigating:
 - (i) the public accountability of state, elite and other social class actors; and
 - (ii) the distribution and exercise of economic and political power in the case of several major political issues, one of which has been, significantly, human rights abuses.

The Philippines shares with other Third World countries unequal relations in its economic and political transactions with the West. Sections of this study consequently examine how the international political economy and global economic forces have affected the country's capitalist development, including that of the media. However it is also strongly argued that domestic political and economic actors have played a fundamentally important role in determining the country's economic and political development, and consequently the nature of the relationships the Philippine media have vis-a-vis civil society and the state. The study will therefore examine how *both* external *and* internal forces and agencies have historically shaped the Philippine polity and its institutions, including the media.

Chapter Two reviews a number of current debates about the processes of democratisation and development; Chapter Three examines theories about contested hegemony, and the impact of ownership, control, agenda-setting and access on the media's roles within democratisation processes. In Chapter Four some of these debates are used to inform the historical survey of Philippine economic and political development up to the Marcos period. This survey forms the context for an explanation of the rise and subsequent predominance of the ruling oligarchy within the Philippine state, and the integral relationship of the country's print media to that oligarchy. The chapter concludes with an overview of the Philippine media over the main period under examination.

The growing hostility of the oligarch media owners to Marcos, and his supplanting of them by his own "crony press barons" after Martial Law is considered in Chapter Five. Chapter Six examines in detail the period of "liberalisation" between 1981 and 1986 which followed Martial Law, and the active roles of the oppositional presses and Radio Veritas in the democratic struggles against Marcos. Chapter Seven considers the political context of the so-called "democratic transition" of the Aquino regime from 1986 to 1992; it analyses the political and economic continuities and disjunctions with previous regimes, and some of the conflicts that arose therefrom. Factors which affected the workings of the mainstream print media over this period are surveyed in Chapter Eight, illustrated by case studies which highlight some of the constraints and difficulties encountered by a "free" press in the Philippines. Coverage of the "democratic consolidation" of the 1992 presidential elections is reviewed as one example of the scope and limitations of the Philippine media's informational role.

Chapter Nine reviews the dilemmas of the Philippine press in reporting some of the political issues which surfaced during the Aquino regime. It analyses the media's ambivalent relationship to the state and its economic and political elites; and the struggles between the state and oppositional forces to win the "propaganda war" over issues such as land reform and human rights. Initiatives from new "voices" outside the mainstream media are detailed in Chapter Ten, which again uses case studies to describe and analyse problems encountered in trying to establish alternative conduits of information, opinion and agenda-setting.

In the light of this detailed evidence, the media's role in democratisation in the Philippines is finally assessed in Chapter Eleven. The study ends on an equivocal note: the massive constraints and shortcomings of the mainstream media in an "actually existing" Third World "democracy" are noted; their power to manipulate and close democratic debate, to the advantage of elites, are fully acknowledged.

Yet the potential of alternative media channels to "voice out" the concerns of otherwise marginalised citizens and classes is also recognised. A new-found confidence and media expertise on the part of proto-democratic organisations is one positive development which has resulted from the political contestations and mobilisations of the Marcos and Aquino eras. Alternative media can thus be considered as one weapon in a Gramscian struggle, however uneven, to articulate counterhegemonic agendas in the contested sites of democratisation.

Endnotes to Chapter One

1. Now referred to more commonly as "the EDSA revolt", or simply as EDSA - see Chapter Six, passim.
2. See, for example, Malaysia's prime minister, Dr. Mahathir, on the role of the press, in "A prescription for a socially responsible press", Far Eastern Economic Review, 10 October 1985. p.28.
3. See Glossary, and Chapters Nine and Ten.
4. See Glossary, and Chapter Nine.

2. CHAPTER TWO. CHARTING DEMOCRACY: CHARACTERISATIONS, DIMENSIONS, DEBATES

2.1. Introduction

Over the last decade, and especially since 1989 and the ending of the Cold War, academic debates on "democratisation" have begun to focus on more precise characterisations of the process itself. Some scholars (for example, Hadenius, 1992; Held, 1993; O'Donnell *et al.*, 1986; Rueschemeyer *et al.*, 1992; Stepan, 1989) have examined its relationship to economic and political development, particularly in "developing countries" of the "Third World"¹. Other studies (for example, Ethier, 1990; Huntington, 1984, 1991a, 1991b; Horowitz, 1990, 1993; Lijphart, 1984, 1991; Linz, 1990a, 1990b; Lipset, 1990; Sartori, 1987) have concentrated on possible ramifications for the social, economic and political stability of the so-called "New [post-Communist] World Order" which the global advance or retreat of "democracy" might affect.

The debate has polarised not only around definitions of democracy and its usefulness as a term covering disparate regimes and characterisations but also, in consequence, around how it and its effects can be measured and compared. Is it essentially a set of formal institutions, requirements and safeguards, which can be assessed quantitatively? Or should it be considered more as a process whereby increasing numbers and groups of citizens within a society are given a voice in the running of that society, together with certain devolved responsibilities for the economic and political conduct of their daily lives - the concepts of "enablement" and "empowerment" (see, for example, Raboy and Dagenais, 1992: 31)?

The relationships between democratisation, political and economic development must be carefully and rigorously explored. Are they causal or circumstantial; is democracy advocated as a social and political benefit in its own right, or is there a hidden agenda, as some Third World sceptics maintain (for example, Kausikan, 1993)²? These critics question those Western commentators like Huntington (1991a, 1991b) who equate democracy with political stability. They point to the comparative inability of Third World "democracies" like India or the Philippines to deliver economic well-being to the majority of their citizens, compared with relatively authoritarian regimes like the "Asian tigers"³. Yet there are others, in turn, who are unhappy with this position. They query the assumption that economic growth and political democratisation are linked in any simple, direct correlation (see, for example, Neier, 1993).

The location and agents of economic and political development - the state, its political composition and the social agencies acting within it - need also to be examined. Whose projects, agendas and interests do particular agencies serve? What constraints are in place to curb their excessive use or abuse of power? How, if at all, are changes in underlying power structures within the state accomplished?

Of particular concern for the present thesis is the question: how are such changes articulated in the media, and whose ends do these articulations serve? The thesis examines, centrally, the role played by the mass media in the processes of democratisation of a Third World country, the Philippines, during a period of political turbulence. Yet before embarking on that study it will be necessary to examine more closely the debates about the nature and mechanisms of democratisation itself. This is chiefly because many discussions about the media, and their indispensability for democracy, hinge on the assumption that one of the media's major roles is performing the so-called "watch-dog" function: to provide information and critiques on the accountability of state and private decision-makers to the electorate (Siebert *et al.*, 1956).

Yet democracy may involve more than formal political structures - of government, opposition, electoral party politics and legal institutions. If it is to include notions of "empowerment", for instance, then the public may develop other expectations of its media beyond the "watchdog" role. These might entail the provision of networks and outlets for marginalised "voices", and for alternative political programmes, for example. Such networks may be both formal and informal, within "civil" as well as "political" society⁴. It is this relatively new demand to "voice out" and "be heard" from hitherto marginalised social groups, especially in the Third World, which may well constitute one of the key indicators of a real "deepening" of democratic forces.

This chapter consequently examines current debates about processes of democratisation; whether such processes can be usefully measured; and what explicatory value the debates might have for understanding important political and economic changes in a particular society. One of the major issues in the context of this thesis is whether formal processes and structures of democracy are sufficient to ensure increasing democratisation of Third World states emerging from the throes of authoritarianism. Can regularly-held, free and fair elections guarantee a more genuine and equitable sharing of political and economic power in such states? Do public institutions with formally separate functions serve effectively as checks on the public accountability of state and private agencies?

Most commentators agree that such prerequisites are necessary. Some maintain that they are the optimum that can be "realistically" expected in large-scale modern societies (Hadenius, 1992; Held, 1993). Others remain agnostic, but proceed on the assumption that, in combination with economic development and progressive class alliances, there is a likelihood that democratisation can evolve (O'Donnell, *et al.*, 1986; Stepan, 1989; Rueschemeyer, *et al.*, 1992).

There remain, however, sceptics who point to the continuities within Third World political institutions - of policies, class power, and even personnel - between former authoritarian regimes and the present so-called "liberalising" or "democratising" governments. Commentators like Petras (1986: 271 ff; 1989: 26-32) and Cardoso (1986: 137-153) have emphasised that "democratising" governments share with the authoritarian regimes they have replaced basically similar assumptions about the structure of the global

economy, their nation's place in it, and the political consequences at the level of state and class interactions. At root these commentators discern an overall acceptance by "liberalising" and "democratising" regimes of the hegemony of international capitalism.

They therefore question whether such regimes can be truly responsive to democratic pressures from below. Are they really listening to demands for a more equitable distribution of economic and political power, and for alternative ways to create economic wealth; or are they merely continuing to pursue elite agendas masked by the populist rhetoric of "democratisation"? The structural continuities which such "liberalising" Third World regimes carry over from their authoritarian predecessors, Petras maintains, include economic dependency on Western markets and on transnational investment and finance (Petras, 1986).

One "anti-democratic" consequence of such structural dependency may suffice to illustrate how "democratisation" cannot be examined in an ahistorical vacuum which ignores economic and political processes. In order to pursue the so-called "comparative economic advantage" of low-wage labour policies, many "liberalising" Third World regimes, like those in the Philippines since Marcos, find themselves endorsing the continued leading role of the military in civil society. This is necessary to repress political mobilisations based on contingent labour unrest, and to enforce acquiescence in unpopular economic policies like the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs), imposed by the World Bank and IMF, which burden the poor. The militarisation used to quell popular conflicts arising from concomitant social injustices is often accompanied by continuing human rights abuses, which are by most definitions antithetical to the democratic process.

The academic perspectives which choose to measure "democratisation" by empirical, "procedural" indices based on formal legal requirements are in definitional and ideological conflict with those which insist that "democratisation" must rest on a substantive deepening of the process of "empowerment". At one end of the ideological spectrum are those who see the spread of democracy on a supposedly global scale as endorsing a Western model of global development and encouraging political stability. This last is defined in the terms and conditions set by a "normative" US-Western political hegemony (Huntington, 1991a, 1991b; Hadenius, 1992).

At the other end of the spectrum are those who propose a model of democracy which would enable a greater proportion of a state's citizenry to share in the essential decisions concerning its running; to monitor the results of those decisions; and thereby to share more equitably in the economic and political benefits that may accrue (Miliband, 1992; Petras, 1986). Critics of this latter position question how the vague and already overused concept of "empowerment" can be realised under the conditions of a modern large-scale polity with the attendant difficulties of effective communication, representation and delegation (Hadenius, 1992).

It is here that considerations of mass communication, including forms of the modern mass media, enter the picture. As conduits for the exchange and distribution of information, opinion and debate, the mass media⁵ have been assumed by political commentators from Madison onward to embody, however imperfectly, a "watchdog" function (Keane, 1991). As the "fourth estate" in this classic formulation they have been enjoined to keep other arms of the "liberal democratic" nation-state, its institutions, government and elites, under constant surveillance in the general public interest.

Yet since the 1960s and 1970s, previous assumptions about the nature of economic and political "development", particularly in Third World countries, have come in for sharp criticism. It has been claimed that such development has been skewed in favour of certain dominant economic and political classes both globally and locally (Prebisch, 1950; Furtado, 1966/ 1970; Frank, 1969; Cardoso and Faletto, 1969/ 1979; Cardoso, 1972, 1973). It has been asserted, furthermore, that the media, far from performing a critical role, have actually abetted and exacerbated this distorting process (Williams, 1966; Miliband, 1969; Schiller, 1969, 1973, 1976; Petras, 1975; Glasgow University Media Group, 1976; Murdock and Golding, 1977; Westergaard, 1977).

The fundamental issue here is not, as some "realists" claim (for example, Hadenius, 1992), a mutually exclusive choice between "representative democracy" and "direct democracy", though it is often caricatured as such. Rather, any analysis of the development of democracy within the nation state - and of the "public sphere", which is one site of that development - should include an examination of public responsiveness. Questions central to this concept can then be considered: which political institutions, social agencies and actors are capable of responsiveness, and in whose interests; to what political stimuli - for example, crisis or mobilisation, parliamentary, "public" or media debate - are they responding, and to whose agendas; and, finally, what political outcomes do their responses have?

Thus when "representative democracy" assumes the elitist mantle of top-down decision-making, without reference to the wishes of those below, populist rhetoric cannot disguise the fact that the decisions taken are for the convenience and benefit of certain segments and class actors of society (Petras and Morley, 1992: 145-176). Conversely if citizens - both majorities and marginalised minorities - are enabled to "voice out" their needs, and their agendas are reported within the "public sphere" and acted upon, the potential for the eventual development towards a more "responsive democracy" is increased concomitantly (Williams, 1983).

2.2. The Media and Democracy: Some Basic Considerations

The mass media may distort, suppress or ignore such voices, or they may try to represent them. Whether even genuine attempts at accuracy of representation can lay claim to "truth" and "balance" in any "objective" sense, is a vexed question both inside and outside the media profession (Parenti, 1986: 39-59;

Entman, 1989: 18-29 and *passim*). It may well be that distortions are embedded structurally within the systems of media representation currently employed, such as news-gathering formats, reporting and editing practices, and the constraints acting upon them (Parenti, 1986; Entman, 1989). This debate also connects with broader questions of epistemology and ideology and their relation to political discourse.

Suffice it here to note that if the messages, however "accurate", are ultimately ignored, drowned out, manipulated or deflected, the media cannot really be said to be contributing a great deal to substantive democracy. Media roles must therefore also be considered in conjunction with broader political outcomes which affect democratisation. These may include, for example, changes in the political institutions and the economic policies promulgated by particular regimes, together with longer-term transformations which may result therefrom, such as alterations in the overall composition of social classes and their relative political power.

Furthermore it is necessary to be precise about which media are under consideration. It may not always be the mass circulation print or broadcasting media which make the greatest contribution to addressing issues of public concern. The role of environmental lobby groups like "Greenpeace" and "Friends of the Earth" in engaging public opinion on environmental issues in Britain is a case in point. They have promoted their agendas through not only the mass media but also through their own activising campaigns and "micro" media, including newsletters, publicity, press releases, and other public fora. These tactics are now being paralleled increasingly by the strategies of concerned social groups - often referred to collectively as "cause-oriented groups" - in countries like the Philippines.

It must be clear from the foregoing that, before proceeding to a more detailed description of the role that the media have played in democratisation processes in the Philippines, it will be necessary to examine the democratisation debates themselves. This will allow us to set the media, as both institution and social agents, within the context of other state institutions, agencies and class actors. Only then can a critique of the supposed "democratic" functions of the media be attempted.

Also under consideration in the context of "democratic deepening" are hypotheses about the potential disparities between the economic, political, and social conditions at the metropolitan-centre and the provincial-periphery. Uneven socio-economic development within a country may well be paralleled by uneven levels of political development. For example, access to national institutions and sources of information; human resources; educational levels; and the disposition and monitoring of democratic and anti-democratic forces, can vary with physical and political distance from administrative, financial, educational and institutional centres.

How might differences along such a spectrum affect the representation of marginalised voices - and is such a consideration a useful index of "democratisation"? In order to examine such questions, there will be included later in the thesis a study of the provincial press, together with "alternative" press agencies

and NGO micro media at provincial level. Their relationship, and access, to the metropolitan centre will be discussed, in the context of reporting issues of general national concern such as human rights abuses.

The time period chosen for the study embraces, according to a number of commentators, changes in the Philippine polity through "liberalisation" and "democratic transition" towards "democratic consolidation" (Wurfel, 1988 1990; Guzman and Reforma, 1988; Timberman, 1991; Hernandez, 1991). These processes can be variously described as "challenges to the status quo", or as the attempted resolution of certain "political crises" or "threats to the prevailing order". The media, in particular, tend to use such "crisis discourse", and

[...if] media are the agents of social communication by which a crisis is made public, then the media-crisis relationship becomes a key factor in the struggle for democracy.

Raboy and Dagenais, 1992: 5

It will therefore be useful to describe the performance of various Philippine media organs and practitioners during these transitions, especially in such media-defined "periods of crisis", and then to attempt to analyse the political significance of such performance. First however it is necessary to define some of the terms used throughout the thesis.

2.3. Democratisation: Definitions and Models

Many academic commentators agree that democracy should include the twin principles of popular control over collective decision-making, and equality of rights in the exercise of that control⁶. These principles can apply from relatively small political associations at local level through to the most inclusive association at national level, the independent state. Yet clearly the question of size introduces practical factors of manageability - administration, co-ordination, representation, and so on - which become more crucial as we progress up to state level.

Thus for many scholars "realistic" democracy at the national level raises questions regarding: free and fair elections; the effectiveness of the representatives and government thus elected; and provision for public accountability to those they represent (Almond and Verba, 1989; Beetham, 1993; Diamond *et al*, 1989b; Ethier, 1990; Hadenius, 1992; Hall, 1993; Held, 1993; Horowitz, 1990; Huntington, 1991b; Lijphart, 1991; Sartori, 1987). It also raises questions regarding the institutions of the judiciary and legislature which, it is generally considered, should be relatively independent of the executive and government.

The electoral system should ideally generate distinct, alternative political programmes which can be selected periodically by electoral vote. These programmes or platforms are usually organised around political parties acting either independently of, in alliance with, or opposed to, one another. Once

elected, these parties constitute the government and the "loyal opposition". The latter by definition recognises the government's right to govern for its legally defined term of office. The electorate are thus, it is claimed, offered a genuine "choice" of political programmes which between them aggregate the interests of the majority of the citizenry. The system supposedly also guarantees that if they so elect, the citizenry can replace a government by another more to their liking, at regular predetermined intervals.

In this formal or procedural concept of "electoral" democracy it is the competitive element of election to public office which supposedly renders government accountable. Elections thereby assume especial importance in the scheme of things. They must consequently be "fair", based on universal suffrage, and free of attempts to distort the outcome by coercion, corruption or exclusion. The civil and political liberties of the citizenry to organise; to criticise publicly their government and other "democratic" organisations; and to keep themselves politically informed via free media - sometimes referred to, generically, as a "free press" - should also be guaranteed by law.

Already at this stage several challenges to the above definitions and concepts emerge. These mainly centre around the adequacy of the stipulations, taken separately or together, to ensure not only the "representativeness" of aggregated group interests, but also "public accountability" and the free flow of information. Formal institutional and functional requirements may be necessary to ensure the continuance of democratic processes already in place, but critics of the formal "electoralist" approach question whether they are sufficient to initiate or expand them. Furthermore, they ask, under what conditions can democracy be initiated and later consolidated in a state with a previously undemocratic regime (Miliband, 1969)? "Realists" retaliate by asking what "realistic" alternatives are otherwise available, particularly at national level, in a modern, mass society; they claim that "direct" - that is participatory rather than representative - democracy is equally open to manipulation by the active few (Hadenius, 1992: 23-28)⁷.

Most commentators on democratisation do agree, however, that democracy is a process, and is consequently susceptible to "deepening" or "reversal". Yet "deepening" is slow and vulnerable; it rarely proceeds smoothly; and it is frequently contested by those whose perceived interests lie in maintaining a privileged status quo. Coming out of authoritarianism, democratic processes may be initiated by a period of liberalisation - the first easing of suppression of rights previously denied. As formally defined by Wurfel, liberalisation initiates "[the] process of change which takes place within an authoritarian regime [...] under the control of its leaders" (Wurfel, 1990: 110). This first period may or may not be followed by open contestation of the authoritarian regime's political bases by its opponents; if that challenge proves at least partially successful, "democratisation" proper may get under way, as genuine political alternatives are contested. This, in the description provided by Przeworski (1986: 58), necessitates "institutionalizing uncertainty".

In sum, democratisation at this formal, procedural level may be defined as a process of rule-making whereby citizens obtain opportunities to participate in political contestation between genuinely alternative

political programmes, and where such participation leads to an unpremeditated but effective outcome, whose result is honoured by the contending parties. "Electoralists" might choose to emphasise adequate "rule-making" in securing a "deepening" of the democratisation process. Perhaps the key issue for proponents of "substantive" democracy, however, would be the existence and encouragement of, and guarantees surrounding, genuinely alternative, diverse political programmes. This concept recognises a plurality of both agendas and attempted solutions to political and economic problems; it also suggests the necessity for a degree of consultation with the electorate about their needs and wishes. It further points to the kind of political responsiveness mentioned earlier in those conflicts of interest which inevitably arise among different social groups. Many of these ideas can be subsumed under the concept of the "public sphere" (Dahlgren, 1995).

There is therefore an underlying requirement, in "substantive" definitions of democratisation, for the organic growth of representative civil networks of socially diverse groupings and institutions. These can act as effective checks on, and render accountable, those who would otherwise dominate collective agendas where interests conflict. By the same logic a "democratic transition" could be described as under way when competing political actors are willing to encourage not only the representation of more genuinely diverse political interests, but also a more egalitarian redistribution of public political resources, including the orderly sharing of power.

According to a procedural "electoralist" position such as Wurfel's, transition "[...] begins as liberalization ends and concludes when the new democratic rules of the game have been formally accepted [by] the ratification of the constitution" (Wurfel, 1990: 110). Wurfel contends that such a transitional struggle may be deemed "consolidated" through the "gradual acquisition of legitimacy" (*ibid.*), when a generally acceptable set of new, stable political rules are not only confirmed constitutionally but are practically substantiated. This is achieved, he maintains, through subsequent elections between genuinely contending parties, where an incumbent chief executive accepts defeat and replacement.

Such formal definitions of democracy do not, however, address the question of the substantive "deepening" of democracy, which may be said to include ideas of "reach" to those groups within society who have tended to be ignored, disabled or marginalised by their relatively inferior economic, social and political position. Advocates of such substantive democracy do not see it as something instrumental to other outcomes such as political stability, but as a desirable political goal in its own right (see, for example, Raboy and Dagenais, 1992). Critics of "democracy as stability" question whether such stability does not, in fact, lead to political quiescence and a false sense of consensus through manipulation and control (see, for example, Chomsky, 1989, 1992; Petras, 1989; Raboy and Dagenais, 1992). Two of them argue, for example, that:

[...] democracy [is] a value rather than a system. As a normative concept, democracy implies equality, social justice and political mechanisms for people to participate meaningfully in making the decisions that affect their lives. Democracy implies an ongoing struggle, in the political, economic, social and cultural spheres.

Raboy and Dagenais, 1992: 5

Here can be seen a concern less with control and stability than with effectiveness in realising, and responsiveness towards, human potential at both individual and group levels of political interaction - what is often referred to currently in political shorthand as "empowerment". The basic political dilemma then becomes that of co-optation versus contestation. Should challenges to the status quo be made within formal procedural politics, accepting their limitations and constraints? Or should challengers attempt to set their own agendas? Does participation in elections, as an end in itself, simply confer legitimacy on the existing political and economic order?

"Empowerment" may have itself become a concept susceptible to manipulation and, as political rhetoric, to co-optation into the dominant hegemony. Yet conceptually it retains the virtue of encouraging social actors in a counterhegemonic position - a self-organising political group, for example - to struggle for their own political agendas. Before entering deeper into debates on hegemony and ideology, however, we should examine more closely the two models of "formal" and "substantive" democracy.

2.4. "Formal" versus "Substantive" Democracy

The "formal" or "substantive" characterisations of democracy reflect fundamentally different approaches in both methodology and analysis (Potter, 1993: 356-7). Academic studies of "formal" democratisation have included a number of comparative cross-national surveys, typically drawing on a relatively large number of cases, with an emphasis on empirically measurable data and indices (see, for example, Almond and Verba, 1989; Diamond et al, 1989b; Ethier, 1990; Hadenius, 1992; Huntington, 1991b; Lijphart, 1991). Analyses tend to stress the role of cultural difference at the expense of historical contextualisation.

"Substantive" studies tend to be more narrowly focussed, with relatively fewer cases presented individually, but in greater detail (see, for example, Cammack, 1991; Hall, 1993; Held, 1993; O'Donnell et al, 1986; Petras, 1989; Rueschemeyer et al, 1992; Stepan, 1986; Stepan, 1989). Typically they provide deeper analysis of historical, economic and political factors affecting underlying causalities and the interrelations between them. They pay more attention not only to unique divergencies, but also to structural parallels, among the countries concerned.

The "formal" approach is in the main quantitative; the "substantive" is historical-structural. A major issue of contention between the two perspectives is not the actual attributes or correlations which signify

democracy and democratisation, but rather the explication of these correlations in terms of underlying causalities. There is often general acceptance that many of those "clustered" attributes, taken to be conducive or hostile to democratisation and its further deepening, do in fact "have an effect". Factors relating variously to: the country's colonial history; its previous experiences with both authoritarian and democratic regimes; its form of governmental institutions (presidential or parliamentary) and electoral methods (PR or pluralist constituencies); and religious and ethnic factors - all these can, it is agreed, play a role in historical outcomes (Alatas, 1993; Almond and Verba, 1989; Diamond *et al*, 1989a, 1989b; Hadenius, 1992; Horowitz, 1990, 1993; Huntington, 1991b; Lardeyret, 1991; Lijphart, 1991; Linz, 1990; Lipset, 1990; O'Donnell *et al*, 1986; Stepan, 1989). Yet there is little agreement on which particular attributes, processes, political forms, institutions, and agents are most significant; on how they relate to one another as factors, or even on how they might be assessed.

2.5. Quantitative Approaches

Quantitative approaches have centred on the more quantifiable aspects of the processes of liberalisation and democratisation. Hadenius (1992), for example, has attempted to draw up a list of indices of those aspects of economic and political development which appear to facilitate the requirements he defines as necessary for a functioning liberal democracy. Such necessary requirements include those mentioned above, namely: freely held elections, fairly and regularly contested by competing organisations such as political parties, with discernibly different political platforms; and constitutionally guaranteed freedoms of expression and organisation. Yet although he deems the last necessary to render democracy effective and government publicly accountable, he never elaborates on the political mechanisms and conditions under which such accountability might be realised in practice (Hadenius, 1992: 29-32; 42; 52; 56).

Another writer (Huntington, 1991a, 1991b) has focussed on the periodicity of democratisation processes, in a schematic "wave" formula of his own devising. The assumption here is that universalistic global forces can best explain current and past waves of "democratisation" in different countries; their periodic reversions to authoritarianism; or, conversely, the absence or demise of either. This perspective derives from Huntington's previous preoccupations with the processes and obstacles to modernisation in developing countries (Huntington, 1965; 1968); the relationship between political development and political decay (Huntington 1965); and the threats to political order (Huntington, 1968) and general political stability (Huntington, 1971) that rapid change in Third World countries might present.

Democracy is here seen as of benefit primarily in the context of global stability. There is also an implicit ethnocentric assumption that it is the manifest destiny of the United States to promote its version of democracy to Third World states as the most "realistic working model". Both Hadenius's and Huntington's accounts suffer from a blurring of the distinction between the correlations of indices, and their underlying causations; this is a defect of several empirically centred writings.

2.6. Historical-Structural Approaches

Writers like Barrington Moore, 1966; O'Brien and Cammack, 1985; O'Donnell, et al., 1986; Stepan, 1989; and latterly Rueschemeyer, et al., 1992, have preferred a more historically grounded "analytic induction" approach to the study of democratisation. This approach emphasises structure, process and social agency rather than the function and efficacy of formal institutions. These writers concentrate therefore on the interactions between social class actors and agencies and their relationships to the state. Most of these scholars stress the necessity for examining processes such as democratisation and authoritarian reversion in the contexts of specific political, social and economic processes "on-the-ground", that is, as applied in the unique contexts of particular countries. They insist on taking into account historical specificity, timing and sequence on the one hand and, on the other, the interaction of political and economic forces. Only by a thorough analysis of the interplay of such historically grounded socio-economic and political factors, they claim, can satisfactory explications of possible causalities between indices and outcomes be approached (see, for example, Rueschemeyer, et al., 1992: 30-39).

Structural conditions are, of course, important. Those existing between social classes and their agents within and between countries, for example, play a leading role in political development. Yet the sequence and timing of the introduction of new economic conditions, and the relations deriving from them - such as industrialisation or changing export orientations - are also significant. Thus the methodologies of these writers have been valuable in uncovering underlying structural factors not always apparent in the correlations thrown up by the broader quantitative survey approach. Their work has focussed predominantly on Europe and North and Latin America. Given their emphasis on specificity, the degree to which their conclusions can be applied to other areas in the developing world, such as South East Asia, will emerge only after detailed comparisons of the various forces which have been historically at work in the individual countries under consideration.

The element lacking amongst many formal "electoralist" accounts of democracy is an element of differentiation: between the motivations of class actors; between the changing alliances among social groupings, and their developing political outcomes; between the formal and actual workings of social and political institutions; between the local, national and international levels of analysis; and, lastly, between the economic and political spheres. In many "electoralist" accounts confusions arise from a blurring of these two spheres - when they are treated as unproblematised concomitants, for example. Thus an implicit assumption of orthodox scholars from Rostow (1962) to Huntington (1984, 1991b), and liberal scholars like Hadenius (1992), is that capitalism as a mode of production encourages democracy almost as an automatic bi-product at many levels of political organisation. Critics of capitalism argue, however, that it is an inherently undemocratic form of economic organisation. It may indeed, under certain circumstances, produce social and political conflicts which in turn lead to challenges and demands for more democratic forms by subaltern groups (Moore, 1966; Rueschemeyer et al., 1992); but in its own workings it remains essentially autocratic, hierarchical and secretive.

Thus questions raised by theories of transition and democratisation (for example, O'Donnell *et al.*, 1986; Stepan, 1989) might be expected to examine not only the nature and length of transitions from authoritarianism to democratisation, but also a discussion of the role of conflicting social actors involved in preserving or challenging the status quo.

2.7. Empirical and Analytical Synthesis

Writing in the mid-1960s, Barrington Moore sought to go beyond the modernista paradigm of political and economic development. He analysed social class relations in a handful of large countries, in order to trace their historical paths to democracy or, conversely, dictatorship. Moore drew on some of the classical themes of Marx and Engels. He concentrated notably on those ideas which adumbrated social class relations in various stages of pre-capitalism, and capitalism in its earlier, nineteenth century phase. He then went on to examine the impact of these developing social relations on economic change, state power and regime formation.

Marx himself had moved in his later writings towards a critique of British colonialism⁸. He commented on the impact of railways - as an instance of colonial industrialisation - on Indian traditional society and its economic modes:

[...] the railways gave of course an immense impulse to the development of Foreign Commerce, but the commerce in countries which export principally raw produce increased the misery of the masses. [...] All the changes were very useful indeed for the great landed proprietor, the usurer, the merchant, the railways, the bankers and so forth, but very dismal for the real producer!
Marx, 1879: 298-9⁹.

In this passage Marx points the way forward not only to later analyses about the ways different classes benefit from a particular economic programme or development, but also about the particular class fractions (landed proprietors and so on) who stand to gain most at a given historical moment, or as a consequence of a particular historical process - in this case, partial industrialisation in a dependent, colonial state.

Barrington Moore (1966) traced three paths to political modernity - parliamentary democracy, fascist and communist dictatorship. Like both Marx before him and the dependencistas subsequently, he argued that the routes are tied to specific class conditions and relationships characteristic of successive phases of world history. His emphasis is on the role of the rural classes in relation to "nation"-building and state formation. He considers the strength of the landlord class relative to other potentially dominant classes such as the urban bourgeoisie; the degree of state centralisation which alliances and pacts among the dominant classes have given rise to historically; and the consequences such factors may have had for regime and institution formation.

His thesis examines the nature of the urban bourgeoisie's ascendancy as the state coalesces, and asks whether it has been strong enough as a class, at certain historical moments in specific countries, to override the landlord class interest in "repressive agriculture". By this he means agriculture based on semi-feudal and/or low-wage rural labour, which has remained held in submissive peonage by state coercion. If the urban bourgeois class fractions were strong enough, Moore maintained, they could either lure the landlord class into commercial market pursuits, as in Britain during the Industrial Revolution, or ally themselves temporarily but successfully with the rural and/or urban working classes against the landlords, as in France. The outcome in both cases has been the "emergence of parliamentary democracy".

In Germany and Japan in their early capitalist phases, by contrast, the landlord class retained the upper hand, according to Moore. This resulted in a strongly centralised, authoritarian state, eventually degenerating into fascism during the second quarter of the twentieth century - as also in Italy and certain Latin American States (Farneti, 1978; Cardoza, 1982; Diamond, *et al.*, 1989a). Conversely in Russia where collective peasant action confronted a weak bourgeoisie, an absentee landlord class, and a highly-centralised state, the result was communism. So, Moore asserted: "No [urban] bourgeoisie, no democracy" (Moore 1966: 418).

In a critique of Moore's analysis and the development of her own critical model, Skocpol (1973; 1979; 1985) focussed on the "relative autonomy" of the state. Whilst her own model downplays social class conflicts in favour of state interactions, she has criticised Moore's work for emphasising class relations at the expense of international dimensions. This, she has claimed, had led Moore away from considerations of the interdependency of his chosen countries at the international level. This neglect may weaken, but does not fatally undermine, the force of Moore's hypothesis. It is certainly true that unequal international economic and political relations, noted by many dependencistas since Moore, have contributed significantly to both nineteenth- and twentieth-century historical developments, including the emergence or suppression of certain democratic forms within the state.

Since World War Two, moreover, economic and political relations have changed rapidly at both international and national levels. The international bourgeoisie - the financial, industrial and multinational owners of capital at the metropolitan centres - have interacted, within certain modes of global capitalist production, with the state, the domestic bourgeoisie, and the subaltern classes. These interactions have

necessarily affected institution-building and other political processes within particular Third World states (Evans, 1979).

What is needed, therefore, for a more comprehensive analysis of inter- and intra-class relations is a methodology which can embrace, and move between, interactions at international, national and local sub-national levels. Moore's contribution, however, remains seminal. His emphasis on the nature of land ownership, and its effects on class and state formations, proves fruitful as an analytical tool in the case of the Philippines.

2.8. Development, Democracy and Social Class

Rueschemeyer, et al. (1992) explore further the links between capitalist development and democracy. They enquire from which classes the demand for suffrage extensions initially comes, and why; how these demands are formulated; how other classes respond to such demands, and what the political outcomes might be (Rueschemeyer, et al., 1992: 5-6). These questions lead the writers into an examination of:

the structure of class coalitions as well as the relative power of different classes to understand how the balance of class power would affect the possibilities for democracy.

Rueschemeyer, 1992: 6. Original emphases.

Complex modern societies in the phase of rapid urbanisation are characterised by organisationally dense networks of social institutions and communications created by capitalist development. The state, according to Rueschemeyer, becomes "not only an apparatus of implementation and enforcement but also the arena in which binding collective decisions are arrived at" within this complexity (ibid.). It is able to arrogate power, he claims - echoing Skocpol - by becoming "relatively autonomous" vis-a-vis the social classes within the state. Thus, Rueschemeyer maintains, the shape of state structures and their relationship to other centres of power are also important for the viability of democratic forms.

Rueschemeyer accepts as axiomatic that the only "realistic" form of "actually existing" democracy is the liberal "bourgeois" or limited "formal" variety (Rueschemeyer et al., 1992:10) - what Dahl (1971) referred to as "polyarchy". Rueschemeyer also accepts as a "massive result" of quantitative cross-national studies that "there is a stable positive association between social and economic development and political democracy" (Rueschemeyer et al. 1992: 29) - though he does stress at this stage that such correlations

do not constitute direct causal explanations (*ibid.*). However this endorsement of such a "stable positive association" is in contradistinction to findings by writers like O'Donnell (1973), whose pessimistic view is that "political authoritarianism - not political democracy - is the more likely concomitant of the "highest levels of modernization", particularly in the case of certain Latin American countries (O'Donnell, 1973: 8).

Rueschemeyer, though, sees capitalist development as engendering democratic pressures:

[...] primarily because of two structural effects: it strengthens the working class as well as other subordinate classes, and it weakens large landowners.

Rueschemeyer, 1992: 58

Rueschemeyer, with Moore, sees large landowners as systematically anti-democratic - they must rely on an authoritarian state to provide the coercion necessary to maintain depressed rural wages (*ibid.*). Conversely, one of the crucial ways industrial capitalism strengthens the "subordinate classes" is that, through its conflictual nature and internal economic contradictions, it encourages the growth of their collective organisations. These are created to represent subordinate class interests in confrontation with those of both the landowning and the capitalist classes.

Rueschemeyer, at least at this stage in his analysis, sees "relative class power" as being at the core of his model for democratisation:

It is the struggle between the dominant and subordinate classes over the right to rule that - more than any other factor - puts democracy on the historical agenda and decides its prospects.

ibid., 1992: 47

He rejects any "universalistic logic" which regards the extension of democracy as a legitimating idea of inclusiveness. He points rightly to the frequent gulf between the rhetoric of inclusionary ideals and the convenience, for the ruling classes, of the continued exclusion of those politically subordinate to them. Thus any kind of participation in political power, however partial, has had to be fought for by those who have been excluded heretofore:

[..F]undamentally, democracy was achieved by those who were excluded from rule and who acquired the social power to reach for a share in the political process.

ibid., 1992: 46

Under what circumstances, though, is such social power acquired? One of Rueschemeyer's "crucial" hypotheses is that the relative size and organisational capacities of the (urban, manual) working class are critical for democracy's advance. In late developing countries - like those in Latin America and the Caribbean, for example - the organised urban working class may be typically small, due to multinational dominance of the "enclave" industrial sector, and a relatively large tertiary "service" sector. Both sectors

are relatively difficult to organise in the face of determined resistance from the international bourgeoisie, with its technological expertise and mobility, in alliance with Third World state bureaucrats anxious to ingratiate themselves for short-term, but desperately needed, investment capital and revenues (Cardoso and Faletto, 1979; Evans, 1979, 1985).

2.9. Alliances, Pacts and Caveats

In the light of these obstacles to working class organisation and mobilisation, an alternative challenge may arise from other class alliances. In Latin America, for example, Rueschemeyer claims that:

The urban and rural middle classes also can take the lead in the struggle for democracy, with an often still small working class in a secondary role. Even professionals and entrepreneurs may play a significant role, provided that they see their interests sufficiently protected and anticipate gains from a more inclusive democratization.

Rueschemeyer, 1992: 60

It is here that Rueschemeyer's tacit acceptance of the limitations of "formal", "bourgeois" democracy leads into assumptions about the democratisation process which blur the distinction between "blocked transitions" and deepening "consolidation". Theories attempting to explicate processes of substantive, as distinct from merely formal, democratisation, need to recognise the international historical dimensions of unequal relations within the global economy. According to dependencista and post-dependencista theorists¹⁰, these are tied not only to historical factors like exposure to colonialism, but also to the continuing unequal economic and political relations that have persisted in colonialism's wake in the particular class formations of those countries.

Elite class collaborators in a neo-colonial state such as the Philippines might be found among: the export-oriented domestic bourgeoisie, including landed oligarchs; rentier, financial, and comprador class fractions; state bureaucrats; and representatives of the international bourgeoisie attached to multinational corporations (MNCs) in financial, plantation, mining and industrial assembly enclaves (Evans, 1979). The class conflicts between these bourgeois fractions and the workforces reliant on export, service and enclave sectors for employment are often sharpened by international dependency. International prices for raw tropical agricultural products, for instance - coconut and sugar are prime examples in the Philippine economy - are in the long term driven inexorably down, and local wages with them.

The poverty of developing countries' working (and unemployed) classes is reinforced by economic policies which the so-called New International Division of Labour (NIDL) has given rise to. The role of global financiers like the World Bank and IMF, and their "poverty-intensive"¹¹ strategies, including economic liberalisation and structural adjustment programmes (SAPs), only exacerbate the deteriorating situation.

These factors, as writers like Cammack and Petras have persuasively demonstrated in the Latin American case, are as likely to give rise, in states "liberalising" out of authoritarianism, to "blocked transitions" as to any substantive "democratisation" process (Cammack, 1985: 192, 198; Petras, 1986: 271, 274; Petras 1992: 12-18)¹². Instead of relinquishing power to political forces representing, or claiming to represent, a popular mandate, the outgoing authoritarian regime, often with intimate political links to the military and other coercive arms of the state, insists on retaining control over substantive sectors of the state political apparatus.

This control may be implicit or explicit, the subject of a pact between the outgoing authoritarian and the incoming "democratic" regimes, or merely an "informal understanding". The effect in all cases is to "block" attempts to address the substantive political, economic and social ills of the society in question by democratic means. Cases in point in Latin America are Brazil, Chile, Guatemala and Argentina, where the military maintained a significant political presence throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s, and a consequent influence, for example, on civilian attempts to hold the previous military regimes accountable for their human rights violations. Consequently, "[i]n Latin America, the impunity of the military and the state security apparatus is one of the factors that has weakened the process of democratization" (Manaut, 1993: 17).

In such a "blocked transition" the formal trappings of democracy - the electoral, organisational and informational requirements outlined above - are accepted only reluctantly by elites who are themselves often tainted with the excesses of the previous authoritarian regime. They are still tied, furthermore, into international capital relations which continue the unequal, dependent relations responsible for the disastrous "development" strategies of the 1970s and 1980s. These have left many Third World countries, including the Philippines, with enormous problems of debt and economic inadequacy in the 1990s. Hence the pacts between elites and "liberalisers" not infrequently stipulate that the slate be "wiped clean" of previous misdemeanours - military, financial, administrative, collaborative or otherwise. A complete return to a status quo ante invariably proves elusive, but elite yearnings for a resurrection of their former economic and political power structures often lead to stronger continuities between the authoritarian and subsequent "democratic" regimes than might otherwise be expected.

Petras (1986), writing primarily about the Latin American experience of "Authoritarianism, Democracy and the Transition to Democracy", makes useful general points about other concrete economic and political conditions underpinning such a transition:

Reaching agreement with the military and their US backers (private and public officials), democratic politicians upheld the continuity of (1) the senior military officer corps - its school, programmes, recruitment procedures, etc.; (2) the payment of the external debt; (3) the existing distribution of wealth, property and taxation. In this context, "economic recovery" impels the democratic regime to extract surplus from the lower class, seek new foreign loans to offset current payments, limit fiscal and structural reforms to a minimum. The result [...] is a

democracy whose socio-economic content reflects the continuities with the previous [authoritarian] regime.

Petras, 1986: 271.

Mutatis mutandis this was a situation paralleled closely by Cory Aquino's "democratising" regime in the Philippines.

Real democratic "consolidation" must therefore go beyond the mere formal requirement of a "second contested election". The search must continue to deepen genuine access to decision-making through truly inclusive institutions; through political machinery that delivers public accountability; and through representative bodies that are both responsible and responsive, rather than manipulative and tokenistic.

Rueschemeyer has warned us against an over-optimistic embrace of either the bourgeoisie - as in Moore's account - or the middle classes, as unequivocal agents of democratisation:

The middle classes played an ambiguous role in the installation and consolidation of democracy [in the past]. They pushed for their own inclusion but their attitude towards inclusion of the lower classes depended on the need and possibilities for an alliance with the working class. The middle classes were most in favour of full democracy where they were confronted with intransigent dominant classes and had the option of allying with a sizeable working class. However, if they started feeling threatened by popular pressures under a democratic regime, they turned to support the imposition of an authoritarian alternative.

Rueschemeyer, 1992: 8

Later in Rueschemeyer's argument, however, this caveat seems to have been displaced by his overriding concern for perceptions of "radical threats" to dominant class interests, which may well "foil advances in democratization" (*ibid.*: 62-63). He therefore counsels "moderation" and "sensitivity" to "dominant interests" on the part of the subordinate classes - in other words a gradualist approach to reformist goals. In the case of the economically and politically marginalised in Third World countries this also implies a tacit acceptance of a "blocked transition" as "the best offer" they are likely to be handed down.

This is a far cry from Rueschemeyer's departure point of a democracy struggled for from below. As Cardoso (1986) has pointed out, the domestic business community as a capitalist class fraction finds itself in an ambiguous position vis-a-vis a modern industrialising state such as Brazil. When it sees its interests being threatened by competition - and possibly by mismanagement and crisis - from the state industrial and financial sectors, it is quick to join in the clamour for "democracy" - meaning, generally, liberalisation of the economy towards privatisation of those patently profitable sectors previously arrogated to the developing state. The bourgeoisie sees that having a "more democratic" intervention in decision-making will further its class interests, namely untrammelled profit-making. Therefore, in the Brazilian case:

From 1976-77 on, when the business community decided to take part in the debate on liberalization, meetings of professors and researchers [...], protests against the use of torture [...] organized by the Catholic church, some trade unionists, students, journalists, lawyers, and so on, already constituted the backdrop to Brazilian politics.

Industrialists' voices were added to the chorus. If the business community did not take the initiative, it did add weight to the movement of civilian society; the press itself "used" the leadership of the private sector to increase the clamour for liberalization.

Cardoso, 1986: 147. Emphasis added.

We shall see in subsequent chapters that there are many parallels here with the Philippine case, although the timing and sequences have been different¹³.

What happens once the "liberalisation" phase is well under way, and demands for a "deepening" to "real democracy" - matters such as being paid a living wage - press on the state from the "subordinate classes" below? Initially, Cardoso observes:

[a]fter liberalization, entrepreneurs seem to have been attracted by "democratic liberalism" in the same way that other social sectors had been. The pressure for the autonomy of social groups and for the breaking of state ties was encouraged (among other classes) by the church, openly supported by intellectuals, and adopted as a policy by trade unionists.

ibid.: 149.

But this liberal bonhomie soon breaks down:

This general, abstract, ideological identity naturally disappears in the concrete clash of interests. The rebirth of the union movement and the outbreak of strikes [...] established the limits of society's generalized good conscience. When the flames of wage claims began to singe the direct interests of enterprises, the enchantment of liberal attitudes evaporated. [...F]aced with an onslaught from the workers, industrialists [...] again resorted to using the state as a shield. [...] As a result, working-class democratization was shattered.

ibid.: 149.

Mutatis mutandis there are again parallels here with what took place in the Philippine situation after Cory Aquino came to power, backed by elite fractions opposed to Marcos. In response to demands from her right-wing backers among the military and local bourgeoisie her regime rapidly moved to suppress human and civil rights, on a scale that surprised her "liberal" supporters at home and abroad; the Philippine church hierarchy also played a vacillating and equivocal role, at first backing the re-establishment of pro-Aquino oligarch and right-wing vigilante forces.

Here is clear evidence that, in the concrete instance, the state is far from "relatively autonomous", as Skocpol, Rueschemeyer, Evans and other theorists have optimistically claimed. It may well be - indeed, it is - the site of political contestations between elite class fractions. Yet in the final analysis it will always be called upon to defend their overarching hegemonic interest - the pursuit of capitalism.

It is therefore to the state that elite classes turn to preserve their political and economic privileges. Bourgeois liberalisers do not, in other words, see "civilian society as [their] source of power" (Cardoso, 1986: 150), and as they are "not one of the most courageous" social groups (*ibid.*: 153) the importance of the political space they are prepared to contemplate being opened up by liberalisation should not be overestimated.

Whilst it is thus true that "bourgeois freedoms" cannot be dismissed as totally inconsequential, writers like Miliband (1969) have nevertheless insisted that these types of democracy and freedom

[...] are profoundly inadequate, and need to be extended by the radical transformation of the context, economic, social and political, which condemns them to inadequacy and erosion.

Miliband, 1969: 239

Miliband was later to counter Fukuyama's "End of History" (1992) thesis which celebrated the "triumph" of bourgeois liberal democracy. Capitalist democracy, wrote Miliband - pace Fukuyama and Rueschemeyer - is a contradiction in terms, since capitalism's overriding modus operandi lies in the *concentrated and unequal* ownership of the "main means of industrial, commercial and financial activity, as well as *the major part of the means of communication*" (Miliband, 1992: 119 - emphasis added). This, he claimed, gives the relatively small class of owners and their managers "a disproportionate amount of influence on politics and society" (*ibid.*) - whereas democracy is a repudiation of such inequalities.

It should also be remembered that the quotidian aims and practices of capitalism are to maximise profits, and therefore they encourage hierarchical, not to say autocratic, chains of command. These are epitomised at the very top, for instance, by the non-elective board of directors, together with an opaque and secretive attitude to information (Parenti, 1986: 4 ff.). Parenti further notes that there is in capitalism an aversion to public (or rival) scrutiny; this is, conversely, one of the basic requirements of democracy (*ibid.*).

As Lindblom (1977) has pointed out, the inherently undemocratic nature of capitalism is mirrored in the means by which the ruling elite classes maintain their political hegemony:

[...]It is clear that the struggle [for political power and authority by elites] neither promises any significant degree of popular control over top authority nor imposes concern for the populace on those in authority. [...]the variety of mutual controls in [elite] politics bodes ill for the possibility of ever establishing adequate democratic control.

Lindblom, 1977: 124.

In short, in the struggle by subordinate classes for the extension of democracy, alliances with other classes - the middle classes and/or bourgeois fractions - can only be regarded as instrumental, a temporary expedient. Given the inevitable long-term conflict of interests, the participants in such alliances make uneasy, and consequently unreliable, bedfellows.

Endnotes to Chapter Two

1. I shall use the terms "Third World" and "developing countries" almost interchangeably, depending on context, in spite of numerous objections to both.
2. See, for example, Bilahari Kausikan's polemic, "Asia's Different Standard", in Foreign Policy, no.92, 1993, (pp.24-41), and Aryeh Neier's rejoinder, "Asia, an Unacceptable Standard", in the same volume (pp.42-51).
3. See, for example, Kausikan, ibid. The Prime Minister of Malaysia, Dr. Mahathir, has accused the West of using Human Rights policies as moralistic leverage, in an attempt to sabotage East Asia's economic success - see, for example, Vatikiotis, Michael, "Cultural Divide: East Asia claims the right to make its own rules", FEER, 17 June 1993, p.20.
4. Though of course the two concepts overlap. See, for example, the discussion in Vilas (1993).
5. "Mass media" will hereinafter frequently be abbreviated, following common usage, simply to "media". "Mass" will most frequently be used in contradistinction to "micro" or "group" media, which are taken to include media with restricted audiences/readership, such as newsletters, wall newspapers and pamphlets.
6. See, for example, Beetham, D., "Liberal Democracy and the Limits of Democratization", and Hall, J.A., "Consolidations of Democracy", both in Held, 1993. For similar definitions, and some nuancing of electoral processes, including debates on parliamentary vs. presidential systems, and proportional representation vs. plurality voting systems see also Ethier, 1990; O'Donnell, 1986; Horowitz, 1990; Lipset, 1990; Lijphart, 1991; Linz, 1990; Lardeyret, 1991. Wurfel's "Transition to Political Democracy in the Philippines: 1978-88" in Ethier, 1990, provides a useful review of definitions pertinent to the Philippine case. The Journal of Democracy (1990 -) continues to debate many formal and informal aspects of democracy.
7. Hadenius, as a "realist", argues that "representative" democracy is more effective for aggregated decision-making affecting the general populace than any "direct" or "delegated" democracy could be, since it is more than likely that "the more active members" in the latter forms would seize the initiative to pursue their own (unrepresentative) interests, or conversely would be too constrained by their circumscribed powers as delegates.
8. Marx, K., "The future results of the British rule in India", in Surveys from Exile, 1853: 320. Cited in Larrain, 1989: 218, fn.5.
9. Original emphasis. Karl Marx, letter to N.F.Danielson, 10 April 1879, in Selected Correspondence, pp.298-9. Cited in Larrain 1989: 219, fn.16.
10. The clearest statement of this position, incorporating previous criticisms of writers like A.G.Frank, is probably Cardoso, 1977. See also Cammack 1985, 1988; Cardoso, 1972; Cardoso and Faletto, 1979; Evans, 1979; Petras, 1986, 1989, 1992.
11. I use this term to signify programmes that increase real poverty or the gap between rich and poor, by severely inhibiting or reversing previous economic strategies of redistribution.
12. For an interesting discussion of the role of clientelism in blocking popular attempts to deepen the democratisation process, see Cammack, 1991: 13 ff.
13. The classic "liberalisation" phase which took virtually eight years in Brazil, from 1977 until the first seriously contested elections in 1985, started later in the Philippines, in 1983, and culminated in the 1986 "Snap Election".

3. CHAPTER THREE. MEDIA AND DEMOCRATISATION: THE CONTESTED HEGEMONY

3.1. Introduction: Media, Democracy and Political Development

This chapter considers the relevance of certain media theories to debates on democratisation. A "free press" is assumed, in the West at least, to be a prerequisite of a "democratic" society: by providing the public with ideas and information, to make an informed choice of political programmes and performances at election times; and by maintaining an informal check on the activities of elected rulers and their allies, in the interim period between elections. These dual functions of the media have been described variously as their "conduit" and "watchdog" roles. However, if these functions are regarded as integral and requisite to the proper functioning of democracy, the question still remains of whether, and how, they assist its qualitative "deepening", particularly in societies where formal "democratic" institutions have, at best, a vulnerable existence (see, for example Beetham, 1993). One theoretical departure point which illuminates this problematic was first adumbrated by Habermas (1962). He postulated as one basis of a modern democratic polity a "public sphere", with its related features of "public discourse" and the formation of "public opinion".

The idea - or, perhaps more accurately, ideal - of the public sphere focuses on the "political space" wherein citizens, through public assembly and association for example, can fruitfully debate political issues of the day. Habermas has suggested that a model for such discourse was to be found in the public meeting places, such as the London coffee houses, of the male bourgeois and middle classes of the eighteenth century. These were the sites of incipient liberal capitalism which actively challenged feudalism and subsequently gave rise to national parliaments and the rudimentary print media of political pamphlets and, later, newspapers. With the development in the twentieth century of mass culture, he maintains, these physical spaces have gradually been replaced in function by the mass media, with a more attenuated relationship to mass democracy (Dahlgren, 1995: 7-11).

Habermas has serious critics, from feminists who point out the exclusion of women from an idealised eighteenth century "public sphere" (Fraser, 1987) to those who challenge the implicit elitism of a model which privileges a small minority of economically- and politically-favoured males, whose class interests may well have been antipathetical to *mass* democracy (Verstraeten, 1994, cited in Dahlgren, 1995: 10). However, the model of the "public sphere" has proven fruitful for those who have interrogated the media's roles in a modern mass society. In the context of "public service broadcasting", for example, Murdock (1992) has explored the public culture of media audiences, distinguishing between the needs of citizens on the one hand, and of consumers on the other. Citizens should be able, he argues, to claim rights in the public sphere to information, access and "fair" representation (Murdock, 1992: 20-21). Seen

as consumers, however, media audiences remain, in his formulation, the (largely passive) recipients of the attentions of capitalism's mass salesmen, the advertisers of a transnational "market place", whose cultural power increases concomitantly with their global reach (*ibid.*: 36-7).

This position, like that of Habermas, can trace its antecedents back to members of the Frankfurt School with their inherent pessimism regarding the modern mass media's susceptibility to domination and manipulation. All three positions have their detractors. Some argue against the supposed implicit elitism of the Frankfurt School and certain political economy theorists¹; others, including a number of "uses and gratifications" theorists of audience reception, criticise what they see as the unproblematised assumption that audiences are passive recipients of media "messages" (Ang, 1985; Blumler and McQuail, 1968; Fiske and Hartley, 1978, Hall, 1980). Whether audiences are largely "active" or "passive" in their reception of media messages, however, it cannot be gainsaid that for democracy to be effective - either at the ballot box, or in the more substantive forms of diverse democratic "voices", accurately represented - citizens *need* information which is both explanatory and adequately contextualised, politically heterogeneous, heterodox and challenging (Murdock, 1992: 19-22).

A response to these "citizens' demands" of the media, and their proposed role in the public sphere, has been made by advocates of a "liberal pluralist" model of the media (Siebert *et al.*, 1956; Schramm, 1964). These include a number of media practitioners. In a "liberal democracy", they claim, the "responsible" media reflect the plurality of views and information available in civil society as a whole - a "mirror" to, or "window" upon, society. These descriptions build essentially on the structural-functional systems theories of Talcott Parsons (1951). They see the media as an unproblematised social institution promoting basically transparent "pluralist" and "modernising" agendas within society (Almond and Verba, 1963; Apter, 1965; Lipset, 1959; Pye, 1963; Rostow, 1962; Rustow, 1967). Siebert, Peterson and Schramm (1956), early US commentators within this "pluralist" and modernising tradition, described four major models for the media. These ranged from "libertarian", via "social responsibility", through to "authoritarian" and "communist". The "social responsibility" variant was an idealised version of the US "liberal pluralist" model which embodied self-regulatory restraint exercised by "responsible" journalists, who should voluntarily eschew "sensationalism". This model was, in Siebert's reading, most preferred as a "development goal". His call for "social responsibility" on the part of practising journalists has been echoed up to present times, usually in the context of increasing media "self-censorship" or, failing that, state regulation and control.

The media as tools for development also figured prominently in the work of *modernistas* like Seymour Lipset (1959) and Lucien Pye (1963). They shared the general enthusiasm for Western-style modernisation, assumed to be the panacea for Rostow's vision of "take-off" for Third World states into a "developed" future (Rostow, 1962). Modern global communications would facilitate the spread of enlightened ideas, including democracy, among the peoples of "backward", traditional societies. The

ultimate goal of modernisation was simply stated: better living standards for everyone.

An alternative, more sceptical, view of the media has since questioned how "free" the "free press" has in fact been in "liberal bourgeois democracies". The focus of critical attention here has been on the media's roles in the maintenance of the hegemony of ruling elites, and other important social class actors, through the propagation of a "dominant ideology" (Barthes, 1973)². These debates have built on the ideas of Marx and Gramsci about the interaction between economic, social, political and cultural factors in the maintenance of unequal class roles - both in production and in society in general. The media here are seen either as a *distorting* mirror, with a very selective view of society and its collective needs, or simply as "the megaphone of the ruling classes" (Barthes, 1973; Boyd-Barrett, 1977; Chomsky, 1989; Curran, 1991; Golding, 1989; Golding and Murdoch, 1991; Hall, 1986; Herman and Chomsky, 1988; Keane, 1991; Mattelart, 1984; Murdock and Golding, 1977; Parenti, 1986; Raboy and Dagenais, 1992; Westergaard, 1977).

3.2. Rival Models of the Media

The media theories of Siebert, *et al.* (1956) and Schramm (1964), are essentially descriptive and, in a Parsonian sense, prescriptive. Both of Siebert's "social responsibility" and "libertarian" models of the media, particularly in regard to their function of news-gathering and dissemination, draw on the idea that market forces will impel the media towards exposing any malfeasance in society, simply through rival competition to "get a good story". Democracy is thereby served through open media debate of any social malfunctionings, of proffered alternatives, and a resultant collective political will to redress injustice and rectify errors. Whereas the libertarian model supposedly "gives the public what it wants" (defined implicitly by media practitioners), the social responsibility model sees professional journalists as public educators in news values and agendas. Implicit in these "pluralist" accounts is the assumption that the "marketplace of ideas" can render the workings of a nation's polity intelligible, and can therefore give rise to a genuinely pluralistic media (Cohen and Young (eds.), 1981: 19).

By contrast, writers of a more critical orientation like Golding and Murdock (1991) regard "market forces" with a good degree of scepticism. They suggest that political economists should carefully examine factors like the shifts in media ownership and advertising support if they want to explain, for example, why newspaper representations of a nation's political spectrum are so incomplete. The notable lack of any serious representation of radical left-wing politics in the current mainstream of the national British press is a case in point (Golding and Murdock, 1991: 26). There is also a need in such analysis, these writers claim, to go beyond structural features to an examination of their consequences upon the daily practices and routines of jobbing journalists, their recruitment patterns, and professional ideologies and ethics (*ibid.*).

News agendas can be manipulated or distorted through a number of common media strategies. "Gate-keeping" (selective inclusion and exclusion of particular agendas by media practitioners); "formatting" (formulaic presentation); "fragmentation" of the "message" - by interruptions from television commercials, or the juxtaposition of adverts next to serious newspaper analysis, for example - are all patterns found in the "media marketplace" with the potential for distortion of information (Galtung and Ruge, 1965; Altheide, 1985: 55 ff.; Schiller, 1973: 24). Yet these factors have barely been considered in "pluralist" accounts.

The possibility of a "cover-up" of political or economic malfeasance also scarcely entered the calculations of writers like Siebert and Schramm. Yet as Cohen (1981) has noted:

Many unusual and startling events are concealed for long periods of time [...] before other events force some discussion of them, while many "events" such as comments by politicians, amazing only in their lack of surprise and interest, are reported in great detail.

Cohen, 1981: 19.

Siebert's preferred model of "socially responsible" media instead assumes and encourages an element of self-censorship and internal self-regulation by media practitioners. Thus internalised, such "responsibility" amounts to manipulation - by partial suppression - of the media "message", carried out either voluntarily or at an unconscious or subconscious level by journalists who themselves are the supposed "guardians" or "watchdogs" of a nation's polity. Suppression and manipulation are hardly healthy starting points for the "free" expression of a genuine plurality of opinions.

The modernisation theories which underpinned the writings of Lipset, Pye, and Siebert et al. were naive in other respects: they did not problematise adequately the internal and external structural obstacles to growth and development in developing countries. Hence resistance to change by traditional institutions and social actors, and economic and political distortions arising from historical conditions, were either ignored or inadequately addressed. From the late 1960s therefore this optimistic and oversimplified view of "development for all" was increasingly challenged by political theorists from the so-called *dependencista* (Cardoso and Faletto, 1969/1979; Cardoso, 1973; Frank, 1972; O'Brien, 1972, 1975; Evans, 1970) and, latterly, post-*dependencista* perspectives (Cardoso 1977, 1986; O'Brien, 1984; Cammack, 1988a). These writers have pointed to serious obstacles to parallel economic growth among nations on the global "periphery". They have also criticised the essentially teleological, ethnocentric and ahistorical nature of much modernisation theory.

The themes of uneven and inequitable growth between and within societies have also been taken up by scholars of media politics. Writers such as Dahlgren (1982); Golding (1977, 1989); Mattelart (1979); and Schiller (1969, 1979) have questioned the notion that media development in Third World states would bring unequivocal benefits to the majority of their citizens. From a *dependencista* perspective,

developing countries have been and often remain under the technological, economic and financial tutelage of the developed Western nations - their former colonisers, and now the centres of multinational and "hi-tech" economic activity (Cardoso, 1972: 86; 90-91).

Other assumptions in the *modernista* writings about media development, such as equal availability - to rich and poor, urban and rural social groupings alike - have also been seriously challenged. Under an overall international capitalist hegemony, technology transfers from rich to poor nations have been neither automatic nor complete, nor have the derived benefits been equally distributed throughout society (Cardoso, 1972; Schiller, 1973; Golding, 1977; Tuchman, 1978; Nordenstreng and Schiller, 1978; Murdock and Golding, 1979; Golding, 1981; Golding and Murdock, 1986; Gillespie and Robins, 1989; Schlesinger, 1991).

In developing countries the high technology which the media require for effective operation can, in fact, create even stronger dependencies than in earlier, less-developed stages of capitalism. Western metropolitan centres ultimately retain possession of the further-advanced technologies which Third World countries have insufficient resources - and local markets - to develop for themselves (Schiller, 1976, 1979; Nordenstreng and Schiller, 1978; Mattelart, 1979; Golding, 1989; Murdock and Golding, 1989; Golding and Murdock, 1991; Sussman and Lent, 1991). Dependency on Western technology, and the foreign exchange and international contacts needed to import it, consequently limits access to media production to a favoured few among the elite classes (Boyd-Barrett, 1977, 1982; Golding, 1977; Sussman and Lent, 1991). Far from empowering the many, this argument suggests, media advances in technological and cultural presentation may serve to exacerbate inequalities within societies, and to enhance and concentrate the political and economic power of elites, by excluding the majority from media ownership, access and control.

Writers like Sreberny-Mohammadi (1991) have stressed, from a different viewpoint, post-*dependencista* exhortations to consider at least three levels of analysis: the transnational, the national, and the genuinely "local", and the political interactions between them. The economic and political interdependency of global, national and domestic capital, and the need to examine economic and political actors at all three levels when analysing the causes and effects of complex political decision-making, had been one of the most significant contributions of the post-*dependencista* perspective. Sreberny-Mohammadi insists that what is frequently characterised as "local" in contradistinction to "global" is in fact, more often than not, really "national"; and that this national level of state and private media ownership, control and agenda formation may actually oppress, or suppress, a truly "local" indigenous culture and its political manifestations (Sreberny-Mohammadi, 1991: 134). The two should therefore not be conflated in academic analysis, in spite of attempts, in the state and elite rhetoric of "national" media, to blur "national" and class interests (Sreberny-Mohammadi, 1991: 130 ff.)

Writers like Blumler and McQuail (1968), and Fiske and Hartley (1978) have pointed out that media effects in themselves are far from unproblematic. Whereas *modernistas* tended to assume that media messages would "speak" to their audiences in unmodified form, these later writers showed that audiences can nowhere be assumed to be *tabulae rasae*. They have their own agendas, and cultural and social filters, processing what they are "told" in the light of their "life experiences" as members of class, ethnic and other social, economic, and cultural groupings. They may even on occasion substitute their own "subversive" or "counterhegemonic" reading of a media message instead of the "preferred" one intended by its creator.

In like manner, other commentators have developed Gramsci's theories of hegemony and counterhegemony (Hall, 1977, 1986; Murdock and Golding, 1977; Schiller, 1973, 1976; Westergaard, 1977). They see the media less as interference-free conduits for the variform interests of a pluralistic society than as the sites of manipulated interventions by elites in furtherance of their own narrow economic and political aims and class agendas. In sum, therefore, the media's role in democratisation and Third World development is far from the unproblematic model assumed by the *modernista* theorists.

3.3. *The Media and Democratisation: Theoretical Approaches*

Questions over the presence or absence of what I have called "responsiveness" by "authority", and the degree of "popular control" over that authority, are central to any deeper analysis of "democracy". The relevance of these questions for the roles and performance of the media are what we must now consider. To make sense of the position the media have in civil society, we must examine: who owns and controls the media and access to them - which social groups as well as which individuals; who sets media agendas, and on whose behalf; and who is affected by these media agendas. These questions link the media to other social and political institutions. They relate also to the monitoring and control of the activities of state and private elites; and the degree to which media practitioners can act autonomously within media hierarchies.

A useful basic yardstick for these examinations would be the extent to which real communications systems approach the ideal of a "public cultural space" (Golding and Murdock, 1991: 22)³ which is "open, diverse and accessible" to all groups in society, in defence of what Golding has referred to as the "three aspects of citizenship" - civil, political and social (Golding, 1989: 98 ff.). Included among the first two "aspects" should be freedoms of speech and universal suffrage; but the third should also embrace "the miscellaneous range of provisions for economic security and welfare" (*ibid.*: 99). It is this last aspect of citizenship which we shall find most lacking for the majority of the world's citizens, particularly in Third World countries like the Philippines - a lack which detracts considerably from claims to be "democratic", and which is often overlooked by Western academics in their analysis of the

more formal attributes of democracy.

These areas of debate fall within the ambit of what Golding and Murdoch (1991) have termed the "critical political economy" approach. As applied to communications it shares a similar methodology to that of the historical-structuralist approach to democratisation. It too is critical of optimistic *modernista* accounts which see media, economic and political developments progressing unproblematically. Instead the critical political economy approach seeks to problematise political and socio-economic power relations within the specificity of particular states and their unique historical developments. Thus analysis of the media should reach "downwards" from the "global" pressures at the level of international economic and political relations - involving, for example, both transfers of technology, and capital and cultural values. It should also extend "upwards" from the practices of media practitioners on-the-ground, and the systemic socio-economic and political constraints upon them.

In an earlier work (1977) Murdoch and Golding exhorted media sociologists to consider wider issues of stratification and legitimation, in order to address:

[...] the central problem of explaining how radical inequalities in the distribution of rewards came to be presented as natural and inevitable and are understood as such by those who benefit least from this distribution.

Murdoch and Golding, 1977: 12

Taken together these approaches go beyond the largely descriptive and prescriptive accounts of function which underpin "pluralist" theories of the media, in order to embrace concerns with social stratification and agency, political organisation and structure, and economic modes of production.

3.4. Media Ownership and Control: Preliminary Considerations

Hall (1986) has put the issue of ownership, and the influence this may have on generalised control of the media's ideological content, into a political economy perspective:

[...]the structure of ownership and control [...] is not as some people think, a sufficient explanation of the way the ideological universe is structured, but it is a necessary starting point. It gives the whole machinery of representation its fundamental orientation in the value-system of property and profit. It prevents new kinds of grouping, new social purposes and new forms of control from entering, in a central way, into the production of culture.

Hall, 1986: 12.

Curran (1991) has also joined in the reassessment of the pluralists' uncritical assumptions about the media's watchdog role. He points out that in the last decade Western media ownership has become increasingly concentrated - often into multimedia and cross-media conglomerates. The relationship of the

media to government has changed in many instances from one of mainly critical appraisal to one of often uncritical endorsement, especially at election time. This may well be in the hope that, by backing current and future governments, media proprietors may win concessions through legislative favours. These might include licencing, distribution, franchising, or - particularly in developing countries - advantages or exemptions in the import of technology or specialist inputs. Or it may simply be an opportunistic approach to maintaining readership and friends in high places. In either interpretation:

[...] conglomerate media are not a source of popular control over government but merely one means by which dominant economic forces exercise informal influence over the state.

Curran, 1991: 87-8. Original emphasis.

Curran notes also that owners of private media have direct control over the hiring and firing of senior personnel (Curran, 1991: 90) - a salient factor in the Philippine case, as we shall see later.

All these factors weaken the autonomy of the editors and journalists of private media organs against interference from their owners and directorial boards. Inevitably this undeclared threat to their autonomy - and, ultimately, livelihood - predisposes working staff, in the long term, towards their owners' political and economic affiliations.

As regards Western advertisers and their effect on the political "tone" of the media, Parenti (1986), citing Gans (1979), asserts that the withholding of advertising support from adversarial media is a strategy which is more liable "to stamp out heterodoxy" in the long run than the more limited objective of simply trying to protect an advertiser's product or industry:

Gans finds that national advertisers usually do not cancel ads in the news media because the reporting reflects unfavourably on their own products as such, but because they dislike the "liberal biases" which they think are creeping into the news.

Parenti, 1986: 50.

Curran holds otherwise. Advertisers for him exert influence less through the direct withholding of advertising revenue from oppositional media than through weighting the economic value of audiences in favour of "upmarket" social groupings and their tastes (Curran, 1991: 96). Thus it is the broadsheets in general which command far higher advertising revenue per reader than the tabloids. Consequently if reactionary broadsheets, representing the interests by and large of dominant and intermediate classes, can claim higher readerships than their centre-left counterparts - where such exist - their support for the hegemonic *status quo* will be endorsed by advertisers and their revenues. Likewise with the broadcast media, the advertisers' concern with ratings "generates strong pressure [...] to conform to middle market values and perspectives (*ibid.*).

Of the two positions, that of Parenti and Gans rings the truer - simply because advertisers are fully aware

of the advantages of "niche-marketing" their products into, respectively, popular and "highbrow" media, and patently employ both strategies to reach the two kinds of consumer audience. Whether Parenti's or Curran's interpretation explains the situation more accurately, however, the net effect of selective advertising support is to curb "political heterodoxy" among their media recipients.

Another pernicious consequence of advertising on the news media is, as Schiller (1973) notes:

Its intrusion into every informational and recreational channel [which] reduces the already minimal capability of audiences to gain a sense of the totality of the event, issue, or subject being presented.

Schiller 1973: 25

That is to say there is a potentially confusing "fragmentation" of the "message", which, if electoral democracy is to be based on informed, considered choice, is a severely disabling effect.

To summarise: the media's role of "public opinion-former" has not been adequately problematised by pluralist models. These tend to extol the virtues of media "choice", "social responsibility" and "self regulation" within a "free market of ideas", and to equate "choice", in their quantitative indices, with factors like the gross number of media outlets. This depiction is at the expense of examining more carefully the presence or absence of genuinely critical diversity and "depth of coverage", and the constraints to which these are subjected by factors such as ownership and (covert) advertising pressures. The part critical diversity and "depth" *should* play in creating informed opinion within the democratic process is consequently not examined with any real seriousness by the "pluralist" school.

A "critical political economy" approach, by contrast, insists on taking into account structural factors at international, national, and local levels. It also appraises "journalistic autonomy" within the media in the light of constraints, manipulations and distortions created through restrictive media ownership (and increasing media concentration); through restricted access; and through the private funding of the media by advertisers.

3.5. Co-opting the Media? Hegemony and Persuasion

Madison's original ideal of "the liberty of the press", embodied in the US Constitution and often presented uncritically thereafter by "pluralists" as an axiomatic ingredient of democracy, contains two essential flaws (Keane, 1991). The first lies in the assumption that the "invisible" and "honest" hand of the "market", acting to curb political despotism, functions in modern society as it did (?) in the small-scale face-to-face polities of antiquity. Yet this assumption ignores the necessity in large-scale societies for *representation* by *mediators*, "so that some [citizens] will necessarily communicate on behalf of

others" (Keane, 1991: 43).

The second flaw arises from neglect of those "circumstances in which the freedom of expression of some citizens conflicts with the freedom of expression of other citizens" (*ibid.*). This fact of modern (and, indeed, ancient) life can be coupled with Gramsci's notion of "hegemony", derived from Marx's own formulation that

the ideas of the ruling classes are in every epoch the ruling ideas [...which] are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas.

cited in Bottomore, *et al.*, 1991: 220.

Those who rule set the agendas which are taken as the "norms" for public and private life. This is the model adumbrated in the "dominant ideology" thesis: a cultural "superstructure", in Marxist terms, underpins and reinforces the ruling classes' social, political and economic hegemony. Hegemony, a concept fruitfully elaborated and explored by the Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci, can briefly be defined in a cultural context as "that process whereby the subordinate are led to consent to the system which subordinates them" (Fiske, 1987: 37). As such it is particularly useful to state actors, given the state's monopoly of legitimate force: it enables state elites to downplay coercion as a legitimating strategy in favour of persuasion and "consent".

According to Hall (1977), through his concept of hegemony

[...] Gramsci considerably enlarges the whole notion of domination [and...] sets the concept at a critical distance from all types of economic or mechanical reductionism, from both "economism" and conspiracy theory. [...] Above all he allows us to begin to grasp the central role which the superstructures, the state and civil associations, politics and ideology, play in securing and cementing societies "structured in dominance".

Hall, 1977: 334.

Yet hegemony in Gramsci's formulation, as Fiske (1987) notes, also allows for a more active resistance to the dominant ideology than Althusser's subsequent elaboration of its institutional mechanisms into "Ideological State Apparatuses" (ISAs). Althusser saw ISAs penetrating many social institutions, from the family and religion, through the legal system and political parties, to the mass media. Ideology, in this cradle-to-grave permeation, could thus work at a largely unconscious level as reproducible "systems of representation", luring the citizenry into accepting as "common sense" those pervasive socio-political and economic agendas which best further the interests of the ruling classes.

Hegemonic ideologies may perform the functions of first fragmenting subordinate classes then binding them into an "imaginary unity or coherence" (Althusser, 1971; Hall, 1977; Anderson, 1991). Capitalist ideology does this by encouraging the subordinate, productive classes to think of themselves as

"individual economic units driven by private and egoistic interests alone" (Hall, 1977: 336), then binding them into a "passive community" of consumers, susceptible to the contracts of capitalist exchange relations.

Barthes (1973) takes the all-pervasiveness of dominant ideology a step further: it can "inoculate" itself, he maintains, against the "disease" of subversion of its ideas by allowing oppositional and even radical groups a voice in the media, but *on the media's (and bourgeois elite's) own terms*. It is the media who control the agendas and parameters of the discourse they allow to be transmitted through their conduits of opinion and information; they can thereby "inoculate" the citizenry and body politic against any widespread acceptance of "subversive" ideas by simply diluting them - a clear case of manipulation by the media (Barthes, 1973: 164). This is a view shared in the main by the Glasgow University Media Group in their various accounts of media bias against those who disturb the *status quo* (Glasgow University Media Group, 1976; 1980; 1982).

Other strategies for the depoliticisation of radical ideas - which we have recently encountered in the Western media and political life in regard to environmental issues, for example - include appropriation and absorption into the mainstream discourse (Barthes, 1973: 155 ff.). Once there the ideas can be "disarmed" and "neutralised" by the use of standardising formats, which often employ cliché and trivialisation to make the "product" digestible (Altheide, 1985: 54-56). These are all too common processes in the media presentation of news. As Cohen notes: "[...] news consists of the unusual event occurring within the rubric of the "usual" characterisations of journalists and press officers" (Cohen, 1981: 24).

3.6. "Propaganda" and "Hegemonic" Models of the Media

These arguments, in broad outline, underpin the hypothesis of Herman and Chomsky in their "propaganda" model of the media (Chomsky, 1989, 1992; Herman, 1986; Herman and Chomsky, 1988). In this characterisation they see as key features of the (Western) mass media: the "size, concentrated ownership, owner wealth and profit orientation of the dominant mass-media firms"; private advertising as the primary income source of the mass media; reliance by the media for their sources of news on "official experts", funded and approved by "primary [...] agents of power"; and the demonisation of ideas antithetical to capitalism, such as communism (Herman and Chomsky, 1988: 2)⁴.

Herman has, furthermore, dismissed as exaggerated the examples of "media dissent" cited by exponents of the now-discredited "gatekeeper" model of the media. He has effectively criticised the liberal model of media "gatekeepers", who are supposedly positioned to allow a plurality of agendas through the media "gate" (Herman, 1986). Such studies are skewed, according to Herman, because of their focus on

newsroom and media organisation, at the expense of any larger framework of analysis which could embrace structural factors affecting ideology and media manipulation. The model is, he claims, too heavily biased towards journalists' own perceptions of their potential for political "space" and dissent. This, he maintains, renders "gatekeeper" accounts merely taxonomic (Herman, 1986: 173-4).

Whilst this criticism may to a large extent be valid as an overview, it overlooks the empirical evidence of opportunities for opposition to the dominant hegemony, which Herman has himself recognised:

Within this framework of control, negotiation and struggle take place among media personnel and between them and outsiders anxious to get their messages across. Whatever the advantages of the powerful, however, the struggle goes on, [political] space exists and dissident light breaks through in unexpected ways. The mass media are no monolith.

Herman, 1986: 172-3. Emphasis added.

Yet in their later work Herman and Chomsky (1988) seem to overlook this legitimate observation in their stress on the larger framework. In outlining their own "propaganda" model, they assert that at the level of international and national political economy there are a number of effective blocks or "filters" to the free flow of information and public opinion formation. Collectively those who exercise these blocking mechanisms might be termed an "elite confederacy", with the potential power to manipulate public opinion. According to Herman and Chomsky they work with and through: networks of elite politicians; captains of the economy; media proprietors and the higher managerial echelons within professional media hierarchies (such as editors); and recognised "media experts", including many conservative - and liberal - academics (Herman and Chomsky, 1988: 3ff. and passim).

For a variety of reasons, such public figures are willing to collaborate to maintain the economic and political hegemony of the elites they either belong to or represent. Herman sums up his position on this "elite confederacy" and its blocking and manipulative powers, by claiming that:

The messages of the powerful are [...] favoured not only by the efficiency of their offerings, but also by the costs and risks of the critical, tendentious and unfamiliar. The top leaders and owners of media enterprises, usually wealthy and conservative members of the business elite, also help set the tone of the [media] organization by selection of managerial personnel and occasionally the imposition of policy rules.

Herman, 1986: 172.

In assessing how such political and economic actors mould media agendas, Herman alludes to: the political values of the powerful; the government's legislative powers in licensing and curbing the media; the political effects of powerful business and elite community lobbies, to which the government needs to respond; the economic leverage of advertisers, and the large companies they represent, as essential sources of media revenue; the high cost of entry into the "high-tech" media industries; and the leverage, as potential "news sources", of those in the top echelons of society who set news agendas (ibid.).

These are all potent forces for directing and ultimately manipulating the messages carried by the mass media. They may indeed account for the "favouring" of the "messages of the powerful" in the mainstream populist press and broadcast media. Yet as Gramsci pointed out, there are also counterhegemonic voices within society which refuse, at least in the long-term, to be silenced, however much the powerful seek to control them (Gramsci, 1971: 235-238; 276; see also Boggs, 1984: 159 and *passim*). Voices critical not only of specific regimes but also of the entire capitalist hegemony as the "only way" of organising society, have often emerged - and have begun to insist on being heard - during periods of crisis and the heightened social and political tensions to which they give rise.

Herman and Chomsky's 1988 study focusses on an analysis of US media presentations of news about the Third World, and the ways in which these have served and supported the conservative agendas of US elites and their governments. In order to assess the validity of their model in wider contexts, however, it is necessary to extend and deepen the analysis they have provided for a Western liberal democracy to other areas, including countries in the Third World like the Philippines.

Besides the elements of hegemonic control which Herman and Chomsky list, other commentators have added other less obvious methods of "infiltration" by the dominant ideology (see, for example, Glasgow University Media Group, 1976; 1980; 1982; Hall, 1978; Masterman, 1985; Schlesinger, 1988). They have pointed to the hierarchical decision and promotion structures within the media profession; and to the professional practices and ethos of media practitioners themselves, which extol the supposed virtues of "impartiality", "objectivity", and "balance".

Hall (1978), for example, has argued that the media are effectively in thrall to their major news sources, whose dominant definitions of reality they reproduce. They are, he maintains:

[...] "cued in" to specific new topics by regular and reliable institutional sources. [...] Ironically, the very rules which aim to preserve the impartiality of the media, and which grew out of desires for greater professional neutrality, also serve powerfully to orientate the media in the "definitions of social reality" which their "accredited sources" - the institutional spokesmen - provide.

These two aspects of news production - the practical pressure of constantly working against the clock and the professional demands of impartiality and objectivity - combine to produce a systematically structured over-accessing to the media of those in powerful and privileged positions. The media thus tend, faithfully and impartially, to reproduce symbolically the existing structure of power in society's institutional order.

Hall, 1978: 340-1. Original emphasis.

As distinct from a "manipulation" or "propaganda" model of the media, therefore, this perspective assigns the media a less consciously conspiratorial role. Nonetheless their role in the maintenance of the dominant ideology remains central; this characterisation may be termed the "hegemonic" model of the media.

According to the "hegemonic" model, then, the factors outlined above combine to ensure that the majority of media news outputs, alongside other media "products", chime with the requirements of those who fund the media and those who set their major news agendas - in other words, those who have *privileged access* for either economic or political reasons. Among the former are private advertisers (and, in certain countries, the state as provider of major revenues); among the latter are public relations and state management elites.

Thus, underlying the so-called "freedom of the press", proponents of both the "hegemonic" and "propaganda" models claim, is a conformity with the overriding hegemony of capitalism and its ideological instrument, consumerism. It is to consumerist ends, Hermann and Chomsky claim, that news and comment on world political events, for example, are sanitised to accord with the thrusts of US foreign policy. These are adjusted to the economic needs of multinational capital to buy raw materials, and produce and sell their products, in global markets. The media deliver to these capitalist producers, as effectively as possible, audiences which will consume both types of "products": the concrete artefacts they advertise, and the ideological rationalisations which justify their activities.

Herman's essay on "Gatekeeper versus Propaganda Models" (1986) provides a useful description of the mechanisms whereby the hegemonic values of the dominant ideology are internalised by media practitioners:

For those at the lower rungs of the news ladder, a sensitivity to the criteria of choice at the top is necessary to the production of acceptable copy [...]

Herman, 1986: 173

- and, he might have added, to career prospects, since promotion in such a highly competitive field often hinges on ingratiation and shared ideological assumptions with higher echelons of the media enterprise.

Herman goes on to point out that "liberal media analysts", lacking hypotheses to link and test the impact of media performance on ideology and mobilisation of public opinion, "yield a bias towards a stress on the possibilities of dissent, openings [... and political] space" (*ibid.*). Moreover "gatekeeper" theories touch only on the *selection* of news, not its *construction*, as Schlesinger (1989b) and Schudson (1991) have also pointed out. They have been generally rejected as sociologically inadequate by "implying a passivity alien to journalism as a process of construction" (Schlesinger, 1989b: 298).

Both points are well taken. In succeeding chapters I shall examine the historico-political contexts in which mobilisations of public opinion have occurred, and the class alignments which have facilitated or hindered them, in the specific Philippine case. Only then shall I move on to the roles of media practitioners, as class actors themselves, in such mobilisations. I shall attempt thereby to pinpoint the nature and impact of media interventions in these processes, and the contradictions implicit in them, in

the particular case of the Philippines during the last decade.

3.7. Dominant Ideology and Resistance

To some critics, Herman and Chomsky's hypothesis appears altogether too deterministic; it also fails to problematise media effects, around which much debate still rages, taking as it does the "powerful effects" model as read. This renders the hypothesis, for such critics, "totalising" and pessimistic (see, for example, Schlesinger, 1989b: 295-302). Is there really so little room for dissenting voices *at all times* - for a struggle from below to widen political "spaces" for alternative agendas? The dominant ideology may indeed predominate, especially among the ruling classes who promulgate it for their own benefit, but is it really as all-pervasive, and the "elite consensus" as unified and unshakeable, as Althusser, Barthes, Hermann and Chomsky would have us believe? As Fiske (1987) has noted, commenting on Gramsci's own optimism:

Hegemony is a constant struggle against a multitude of resistances to ideological domination, and any balance of forces that it achieves is always precarious, always in need of re-achievement. Hegemony's "victories" are never final, and any society will evidence numerous points where subordinate groups have resisted the total domination that is hegemony's aim, and have withheld their consent from the system.

Fiske, 1987: 40

Other commentators, arguing within a Marxist framework, have noted that the dominant ideology may hold hegemonic sway over the dominant classes themselves, *in certain circumscribed circumstances*; but that there are other ideologies to which the subordinate classes also actively subscribe (Abercombie *et.al.*, 1980a; 1980b; 1990).

These may *in normal times* be indeed submerged under the dominant ideology - backed ultimately by the coercion and legitimating legislation of the State. However, there are circumstances when the counterhegemonic resistances of the subordinate, and even intermediate subaltern, classes emerge to challenge this hegemony. Furthermore, the elites may themselves compete amongst several different, and often bitterly divided, class fractions (as Moore and Rueschemeyer have stressed). This may on occasion fragment or fracture the hegemony; resulting disunities among the elite fractions may be articulated in the media, to the advantage of subaltern groups who may take this fragmentation as a signal for challenges from below. The media too, as Herman and Chomsky remind us, are "no monolith": their representations of the dominant hegemony will ever remain imperfect.

It is this continuing process of contestation over hegemony and the changing nature of class alignments, which is one of the essential ingredients of democracy. Hill (1990) summarises this position:

[...C]ertain groups, notably those with higher education [including what Hill calls the "service", i.e. middle, classes], display a greater willingness and self-confidence to use political citizenship to influence government. There would appear to be an unmet aspiration to have more control over the institutions that have power over people's lives, and to do so in ways that share the benefits more widely.

Hill, 1990: 33.

Williams has also commented, in a different context, on the potential role the middle classes might have in such resistances:

The significance of predominantly middle-class leadership or membership of the new [civic and alternative, oppositional] movements and campaigns is [...], first, in the fact of some available social distance, an area of affordable dissent. It is, second, in the fact that many of the most important elements of the new movements and campaigns are radically dependent on access to independent information, typically though not exclusively through higher education, and that some of the most decisive facts cannot be generated from immediate experiences but only from conscious analysis.

Williams, 1983: 254. Emphasis added.

We may partly agree here with both Williams and Rueschemeyer that the middle classes might well be better positioned than the working classes, economically and educationally - given their comparatively advantageous life chances - to rise to the challenge of political mobilisation, *should they consider it in their best interests*. It may well also be that as a class they have comparatively better access to the mass media, as both practitioners and as audiences and readers, than the working classes. Yet, as this thesis will attempt to demonstrate, in the long term the middle class and their allies in the media have a different agenda: the achievement of their own eventual hegemony, *not* that of popular forces.

Among his various works on the relationships between culture, hegemony and class (1966; 1974; 1983), Williams states categorically in one of his later summations that "the only relevant approach is one of challenge" to the growing "harsh movement beyond the now familiar [political] forms, into new and more open kinds of control and oppression" by political elites and their institutions (Williams, 1983: 251). This position has been all too real in Third World countries like the Philippines where, for example, increasing militarisation and concomitant human rights abuses, initiated during the Martial Law period under Marcos, have continued into the periods of so-called liberalisation and democratisation.

This thesis investigates those areas of challenge and resistance to the dominant hegemony in the Philippines at a particularly turbulent period of its history. It also examines the social and political forces, including class alignments, alliances and conflicts, which have contributed to such resistances. It analyses especially the role of media practitioners in articulating, distorting or simply ignoring these resistances, and scrutinises the underlying political, economic, and social class interests which propel media journalists towards those particular roles. It examines, too, the way that media representations of these resistances and challenges have differed according to the positions assumed by both mainstream and alternative printed media, in metropolitan Manila and in the provincial press, and how they have

reflected changing political alliances and contestations.

The thesis also considers whether such media activities have in fact enhanced or inhibited the democratic project in the particular case under consideration: a Third World country with a specific history of media development, related to its colonial past and its present place in the global political economy. Questions will also be raised about the media's role in encouraging public accountability, access of marginalised voices and the pursuit of genuinely pluralistic agendas; and about the extent to which decision-makers and other elites within the state pay any attention to the media's much-vaunted "public opinion formation".

3.8. Democratisation in Practice: the Philippines

Democracy was supposedly restored to the Philippines by "people power" in 1986. Prior to President Marcos's imposition of Martial Law in 1972, the Philippines had often been held up, in the Western media at least, as the "USA's showcase for democracy in the Far East" (see, for example, Wurfel, 1988; Timberman, 1991)⁵. Hence the 1986 "democratic restoration" was seen by some commentators as a return to the *status quo ante*.

Other scholars and writers (Bello, 1986, 1987; Schirmer and Shalom, 1987; Constantino, 1987, 1989; de Quiros, 1990, 1991) still debate the relative importance of the various political and economic processes and forces behind the media-grabbing events leading to the transitions to and from authoritarianism. These include the imposition of Martial Law in 1972, its lifting in 1981, the assassination of Marcos's chief rival, Benigno Aquino, in 1983, and the EDSA Revolt⁶ of 1986. There is also dispute over whether the Philippines has experienced since 1986 only "liberalisation" and a "blocked [democratic] transition" or is, since the 1992 presidential elections, firmly on the road towards full "consolidation" (see, for example, Flamiano and Goertzen, 1990; Goodno, 1991; Timberman, 1991; Kalaw-Tirol and Coronel, 1992). For Philippine commentators like Constantino (1987, 1989) and Bello (1987, 1990), for example, the Philippines is still in a state of crisis; for them, "democratisation" is a distant goal. The crisis, they claim, reflects continuities with previous regimes and past experience. Anderson (1988) has characterised this experience as "*cacique* democracy", meaning a "democracy" of elite oligarchs and local bosses, clans, and warlords - not a basis for substantive "empowerment" of the civil population.

Questions about the relationship of democratisation to problems of economic growth and to a fairer distribution of the nation's wealth and political power - and conversely about the threat of an authoritarian reversion - assume more than mere academic interest however. It could be said that the livelihoods of a majority of Filipinos depend on such questions.

The Philippines' mediocre economic performance since the 1960s - relative to its ASEAN neighbours, at least - can be accounted for only by a historical perspective that reaches back to its colonial past, its economic and political relationship with the United States, its internal class structures and post-Independence economic policies. Suffice it to say here that, for the Philippines at least, considerations of the reality and effectiveness of democracy are inextricably linked to its historical economic and political development.

The Philippine media's roles in disseminating information and opinion about the nation's political and economic development have expanded enormously since the days of Martial Law (1972-81). There is an awareness, at least among the informed public, of the political, societal, and even economic dysfunctions associated with gagging the press, and a still-vivid memory among media practitioners and intellectuals of the negative experiences many of them suffered under Marcos.

Members of the Philippine press corps, for example, still recount stories of being incarcerated and even tortured under Martial Law for their opposition to authoritarian rule; a number of them have claimed to suffer from continuing sporadic harassment from military and other anti-democratic elements bent on silencing media criticism of their activities (National Press Club, 1983: 25-27; Maslog, 1990: 44; Cadagat, 1988: 194, 198, 200; Reyes, 1992: 107, 132-3). These have included human rights abuses perpetrated against activists in church, trade union, NGO and people's organisations (POs), for example, as well as against ethnic minorities, urban and rural land squatters, and other rural communities who have attempted to resist the depredations of loggers, multinational agribusiness and mining concerns (*ibid.*).

These harassments are more likely at the margins of Philippine society - in remote mountain and rural provinces, for example - because of the difficulties of organisation and communication, and of bringing the perpetrators to book. Reporting such abuses can therefore be an extremely risky business, with little protection afforded by the formal institutions of "law and order", which are in fact more than likely to be involved with, or to implicitly condone, the abusers than to protect and defend their victims. This has created a climate of cynicism among both military and public alike, with impunity still seen as the most plausible outcome for human rights violations by military and paramilitary forces.

The Philippines topped the international lists for numbers of journalists killed on duty over several years. These killings were mainly as a consequence of anti-establishment or anti-military reports in the press; there are claims that such extreme punitive measures actually increased during the so-called "liberalisation" and "democratisation" periods of the post-Martial Law and Aquino eras (Reyes, 1992: 132-3)⁷. Military and police impunity for human rights crimes has been, throughout the period of the Aquino regime and subsequently, one of the major obstacles to the so-called "peace process" between the government and left-wing guerrillas, yet media reporting of such harassments has been sporadic and

inconsistent.

Thus the claim to a "democratic press" in the post-EDSA Philippines has had, to radical critics like Constantino (1988), a hollow ring. As he wrote in a newspaper article, "Media and democracy", within a year of Cory Aquino's inauguration as president:

[...] the essence of democracy is not only pluralism, where contending views representing the various factions of the elite who control media slug it out in the open field. Democracy must also mean mass participation, and in the media sphere, this is tantamount to a concrete recognition of the people's right to receive and impart information [...]. This is the kind of democracy which we do not have.

Constantino, 1987: 82-3.

Constantino pointed out that only one in three Philippine households takes a newspaper or owns a television, and even the more generally ubiquitous radio only reaches 65% of households. Periodicals, with their more "in-depth" political analyses, are "virtually unaffordable": a year's subscription would cost a Manila worker 20 days' wages. Constantino asks how ordinary Filipinos can be adequately informed, with such limited access to the media:

How can they articulate their needs and opinions through the established media where the flow is generally one way - from top to bottom, with the grassroots merely serving as a passive and manipulated audience? How can there be real democracy if the masses of our people are deprived of their right to know and be heard?

ibid.

Constantino added, presciently, that "though hardly noticed" a new generation of Aquino "cronies"⁸ was already surreptitiously displacing former Marcos collaborators as press owners, "through subtle intimidation, sequestration, and quiet buyouts" (ibid.). As Constantino remarked, democracy depends in part on "the right[s] to know and be heard", and these come at an economic price: with such unequal distribution of wealth in the Philippines, there is little hope of universal access to the media in the foreseeable future. Nor is that requirement uppermost in the majority of the population's priorities. For the 72% of the population calculated to be below the poverty line in 1992⁹, the "restoration of democracy" has still brought no remission from the relentlessly widening gap between rich and poor. Neither has it led to government reconsideration of the economic restructuring imposed by international financial institutions; nor yet an appreciably different political programme to address these problems with alternative solutions.

It is hardly surprising that in the latter years of Aquino's presidency there was growing scepticism and disappointment over the continuing elusiveness of any broadly-felt economic benefits of democracy, Filipino-style. Some of this scepticism was indeed voiced in the mainstream mass media, notably the liberal press. Yet the performances of many Philippine newspapers can be seen as an extension of the

rent-seeking behaviour not only of the traditional landed oligarchy, but also the *comprador* and *parvenu* bourgeois classes which have been particularly in the ascendant since the Marcos years.

All these class fractions in the Philippines basically seek short-term economic and political advantage. Hence they use the media they own, or have influence over, to make personal criticisms of economic and political rivals or to protect their own interests, rather than to present any kind of principled analysis of, or solutions to, societal ills. To understand how these distorted and often contradictory versions of "democracy" and a "free press" have arisen in the Philippines it is necessary to review the historical evolution of the country from its underdeveloped colonial past to its debt-ridden and oligarch-dominated present: these are the major themes of the following chapter.

Endnotes to Chapter Three

1. This criticism certainly cannot be sustained against Murdock. He argues, on the contrary, that the majority of citizens are excluded from access to the mass media as presently constituted.
2. The term has occasioned some dispute (see, for example, Abercrombie *et al.*, 1980).
3. Golding and Murdock's idea of a "public cultural space" is related to Habermas's concept of the "public sphere".
4. More recently Islam appears to have become the *bête noire* of many populist Western politicians and media.
5. On the freedom of the pre-Martial Law Philippine press, and its "restoration" under Aquino see, *inter alia*, Rosenberg, 1973; Lent, 1982; Pinedo-Ofreneo, 1986; Gonzalez, 1988; Shaffer, 1991; Sussman, 1990.
6. EDSA stands for Epifanio de los Santos Avenue, where the major military revolt against Marcos, led by his former Defence Minister, Juan Ponce Enrile, and General Fidel V. Ramos, Deputy Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, took place between 22 and 26 February 1986.

EDSA is the main highway or ringroad on the eastern and northern periphery of Metro Manila, on which the two major urban military barracks of the capital, Camp Aguinaldo and Camp Crame, are situated - hence EDSA's strategic importance. What was popularly known at the time as "the People Power revolution" is now more prosaically referred to in Manila as "the EDSA revolt" - or simply "EDSA".
7. General human rights violations reported for the period 1986-1992, during the Aquino regime, included: "salvage" victims, 1,011; involuntary "disappeared", 321; massacre cases, 330 (source: IBON Survival Calendar, 1993).
8. Marcos "cronies" - an inner circle of close relations, friends and top-brass military - systematically plundered the state *to the exclusion of all other elite actors*. Constantino was implying that similar relations obtained within the Aquino regime; the term implies corruption on a massive scale.

9. IBON Databank, cited by *Philippine News and Features*, published in the *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 27 September, 1992. On general trends through the 1980s, see also IBON Facts and Figures, vol.6, no.122, 16 January 1983, and IBON Facts and Figures, vol.11, no.24, 31 December 1988.

4. CHAPTER FOUR: OLIGARCHS, CACIQUES AND "DEMOCRACY"

4.1. Introduction

The previous two chapters have highlighted the importance of studying economic and political processes within a specific historical context. This approach will be employed in the succeeding chapters to explain more fully significant political and economic patterns of development in the Philippines throughout the twentieth century; the Philippine media's roles in that development and, particularly, in the democratisation process. The media's roles can best be assessed by tracing their historical development in interaction with other political and economic institutions and social agencies. It is important, for example, to ask: whose interests do these institutions best serve? who has controlled such institutions in general, and the media in particular? Has control been exercised directly through economic ownership and political domination, or indirectly through political influence and persuasion? How and why has this control changed with varying economic and political conditions? What involvement have the media had in representing these institutions and holding their agents accountable to the public?

This chapter sketches the Philippines' historical, economic and political background from the colonial period up to the imposition of Martial Law by President Marcos in 1972. Developments contributing towards persistent structural features of the country will be assessed; continuities and breaks with the past will be highlighted. It is hoped thereby to arrive at a framework in which both current political and economic processes can be understood. This will permit a more thorough examination of the forces at work in the Philippine polity which have encouraged or discouraged processes of substantive democratisation. Only then can a more detailed appraisal of the media's role in these processes be essayed.

After a brief geographical and economic characterisation of the country the chapter reviews Philippine political history starting with the colonial period. These formative stages of the national polity established patterns of economic and political behaviour which have persisted through to the present time. After the examination of the Philippines' colonial experience there follows a brief description of the evolution of a few of the country's major post-Independence political institutions, electoral and state patronage mechanisms, in order to assess the "realities" of the Philippine democratic process. This in turn leads to a survey of the country's social class composition, and its relationship to economic and political forces, structures and policies.

As the narrative reaches beyond Independence towards the present period, certain themes and issues recur. They include: the vexed questions of human rights abuses; the presence of US military bases; the

predominance of the merchant comprador class and the poorly performing economy; the power of landowners (and in particular the sugar bloc) and the ineffectiveness of industrialisation; the economic penetration of foreign capital; the political significance of the church; the neglect of ethnic minorities, and the destruction of the environment. The account will also signal the prevalence of an economic and political culture of rent-seeking, venality and opportunism, which appears to encourage, rather than to deter, the systematic plunder of national assets for the benefit of a very small elite minority (see, for example, Kunio, 1988).

The chapter concludes with a brief survey of the patterns of ownership of the Philippine media, focussing on the period 1965 to 1993. This overview indicates how a small number of elite families came to dominate the country's media after Independence. It shows how these patterns of media ownership were disrupted by Martial Law in 1972, and then partially re-established in the supposedly "free" mainstream press after EDSA in 1986. The survey demonstrates that the names of elite owners may have changed over time and through differing political exigencies; however, the structural patterns - of concentrated media ownership among a small number of powerful elite families - have remained; this factor alone represents a direct challenge to any genuine diversity of social articulation and, hence, any substantive pluralism in the Philippine press.

4.2. Geopolitical Boundaries and Economic Indices

The Philippines is an archipelago of seven thousand islands with a land size slightly greater than the British Isles bounded by the South China Sea to the west, the Luzon Strait to the north, the Philippine Sea and beyond it the Pacific Ocean to the east, and the Sulu and Celebes Seas to the southwest¹ (*see Map 1*). Beyond the seas to the north and west rises mainland East and Southeast Asia; immediately to the southwest and south lie the other Malay-inhabited² territories of Malaysia and Indonesia. The countries immediately to the north are Taiwan and mainland China; Vietnam and Indochina lie directly to the west.

Of the thousand or more inhabited islands within the archipelago the northern island of Luzon is the largest, with the second largest, Mindanao, to the south³. Between them are strung, east to west, a dozen or more important, medium-sized islands known collectively as the Visayas. Among these are found Panay, Negros, Cebu, Leyte and Samar. To the southwest lies the Philippines' third largest island, Palawan, pointing towards the East Malaysian state of Sabah, in Borneo. The country's three largest cities are Metro Manila (Luzon), Davao City (Mindanao) and Cebu City (Cebu).

The Philippines had an estimated population in 1994 of around 65 million, of which more than eight million, or around 12.5%, reside in the National Capital Region (NCR) of Metro Manila⁴. Manila lies

on the western coast of the fertile Central Luzon plains; much of the remainder of the country includes mountainous areas of volcanic origin. The two highest mountains are Mount Apo (2953 metres) on Mindanao, and Mount Pulong (2930 metres) in northern Luzon.

Since the Philippines lies geologically on the tectonic plates of the Pacific Rim there are several large active volcanoes⁵, including Pinatubo, Mayon and Taal, which have erupted in the 1990s to devastating effect. There is also the likelihood of typhoons in the wet season (June to October), and landslides and earthquakes which have struck several times in recent years. Conversely, the Philippines has many natural endowments, including a tropical climate, fertile volcanic soils, rich deposits of minerals like chrome, iron and copper and relatively plentiful geothermal energy.

The country seems to have been unusually prone to natural disasters over recent years. However, the man-made social, economic and political disasters perpetrated during the regime of the late President Marcos (1965-86) far outweighed so-called natural ones. From being one of the leading economies of Southeast Asia in the 1950s, with a GNP second only to Singapore, the Philippines has now fallen behind countries like Malaysia and Thailand, and looks set to be overtaken even by Indonesia in the near future⁶.

In "international league tables" the Philippines might be described as a "middle-income developing country" compared with, say, moderately-performing African countries like Kenya or Zambia, or with Asia's poorer countries like China and India, or its very poorest, Nepal and Bhutan (see Table 1). Yet ominously, the Philippines had severely negative GDP growth in the last two years of the Marcos regime (1984-85) and near zero growth for the last two years of the Aquino incumbency (1991-92). Real GNP for the 1980s averaged only 1.5% annually, well below the estimated population growth; this compared with other ASEAN⁷ countries' performance of 7-8%⁸. The statistics for the Philippines have been all the more disappointing when combined with a significantly higher inflation rate than its more economically-bouyant ASEAN neighbours.

Conversely, negative indicators of poverty showed comparatively higher Population Growth and Infant Mortality Rates (I.M.R.). Although the population growth rate, officially at 2.3 percent, appears to lag behind countries like Malaysia, it was unofficially estimated as "closer to 3 percent" (Lande, 1991: 56) in the early 1990s. A "spectacular post-war rise in population", averaging almost 3 percent per annum, has made the Philippines "one of the fastest growing countries in the world" (Burley, 1973: 173, cited in Fast, 1973: 70). The reality of this increase can be gauged by absolute population figures: 19 million in 1948; 27 million in 1960; 40 million in 1974; 65 million in 1994 (sources: NEDA, Philippine Statistical Yearbooks, 1987-93; *FEER* Almanac, 1994).

Table 1. Comparative Economic and Poverty Indicators, 1992.

	GNP per capita	GDP growth	Inflation	Pop. growth	I.M.R. *
Singapore	\$15030	5.6%	2.3%	1.1%	6
Malaysia	\$ 2965	8.5%	4.7%	2.6%	13
Thailand	\$ 1660	7.4%	4.5%	1.4%	24
<i>Philippines</i>	<i>\$ 835</i>	<i>0.0%</i>	<i>8.2%</i>	<i>2.3%</i>	<i>40</i>
Indonesia	\$ 645	5.5%	8.0%	1.8%	65
(Kenya	\$ 340	4.0%	14.8%	3.7%	64)
(Nepal	\$ 170	4.0%	15.4%	2.3%	118)

*I.M.R. = Infant Mortality Rate

(Source: *FEER*, 17.2.93.)

One indicator often seen as conducive to democracy is the Literacy Rate. Here the Philippines scores more highly than many of its neighbours: 93.5% literacy, compared with 78.5% for Malaysia, 85% for Indonesia, and 90.7% for Singapore. Yet even here a caveat is in order: according to Cruz in 1971 "a great bulk of the nation barely finished elementary school", so literacy is basic (cited in Pineda-Ofreneo, 1986: 133; *see also below*). However, a majority of Filipinos can understand some English, and the more educated are very proficient in the language.

In terms of future economic development there is optimistic talk in government circles of the present Ramos regime about the Philippines joining the East Asian NICs by the year 2000; this has been seen by critics of the government, however, as counting chickens before they are hatched⁹. Economic performance has indeed been improving since late 1993, with the easing of the severe energy crisis that resulted in power cuts lasting up to ten hours a day in the first half of 1993. The Philippine annual GDP for 1994 grew by over 4%, rising to 5.5% in 1995, and over 6% in 1996 (*FEER*, 26 September 1996).

The programme of liberalising the economy, commenced under Aquino and accelerated under Ramos, has been at the cost of severe public spending cuts (*MT*, 31 March 1994; *MC*, 13 April 1994; *PDI*, 14 April 1994). One result of this liberalisation has been increasing unemployment and poverty, and increased dependency on volatile foreign markets. Inflation has risen during the period of the Ramos presidency at over 11% per annum; the gap between the richest and poorest 10% of the population actually widened during this period (*FEER*, 26 September 1996). This has repeated familiar economic cycles encountered during previous regimes. The majority of Filipinos have yet to see any substantive alleviation of their poverty: the wealth of the Philippines remains one of the most maldistributed in Asia (see, for example, "RP-IMF Draft Economic Programme", *MC*, 31 March 1994).

Sustained economic growth over any extensive period of time has remained elusive in the Philippines. The more salient structural features which have historically given rise to the country's endemic economic and political weaknesses will now be examined.

4.3. Compradors and Collaborators: the Philippine Colonial State

There is a Filipino catch phrase which neatly encapsulates the country's colonial experience: "three hundred years in a Spanish convent, followed by forty years in Hollywood". Behind this apparent flippancy lie more sober truths. The Philippines is one of the few countries in the modern world to have suffered colonial subjugation under two different imperial masters (or three, counting Japan in World War Two).

The Spanish ruled the Philippines, which they named after their king, Felipe (Philip) II, as a permanent colony from 1565¹⁰. It was primarily seen as a gateway to the "Cathay trade" of mainland Asia, and particularly as an economic link with Chinese traders, who thus came to play, from early on, the important historic role of intermediary *compradors* in the Philippine economy. The "Manila galleon" plied the route to Mexico laden with profitable Asian luxuries like silk and porcelain in exchange for Mexican silver. The Philippines' subordinate status arose because it was seen by the Spanish primarily as a staging post and entrepot for trans-shipment. This perception was reinforced by its being ruled, not directly from Spain but from Mexico, until the latter country gained its independence from Spain in 1821. The Philippine economy was thus highly dependent, skewed towards export trade, from early colonial times. Throughout their period of rule the Spanish colonists neglected to diversify into other commercial, agricultural or industrial ventures.

The penurious Spanish Crown preferred to grant land tracts, known as *encomiendas*, in return for tribute. The beneficiaries of this system were favoured colonial administrators and the various Roman Catholic orders of friars: Augustinians, Franciscans, Jesuits, Dominicans and Recollects, who in Robert Louis Stephenson's apt phrase "came to do good and stayed to do better"¹¹. By the mid-nineteenth century a new class of landowners was becoming a significant economic force in the country (Anderson, 1988: 6-8). Many of them were of Chinese or *mestizo*¹² origin; their landholdings were purchased using wealth accumulated from *comprador* trade.

With educational reforms in 1863 allowing non-Europeans access to higher education in Spain, and the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 which effectively brought Europe "nearer", wealthy Philippine *mestizo* families were able to send their sons for a European education. These returned with European liberal ideas to form a new social and cultural group, the *ilustrados* ("enlightened ones"), who agitated for more autonomy from Spain.

These *ilustrado* families were already in the process of benefitting from the liberalisation of trade¹³, which Spain's declining economy had occasioned from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. They collaborated with new Anglo-American entrepreneurs and merchant houses to form a new axis of commercial agriculture (Anderson, 1988: 7; Fast, 1973: 72). One symptomatic outcome of this collaboration was the establishment by the British entrepreneur, Nicholas Loney, of a viable sugar production on the adjacent islands of Negros and Panay in the Western Visayas. As one commentary notes succinctly of Negros:

[...] over the ensuing years, the island, which had until then been known for its thriving textile industry¹⁴, was covered with a mass of haciendas set up, often by force, by Loney and local ilustrados from neighbouring islands [...] while the majority of its population had been reduced to conditions of virtual slave labour on the sugar haciendas.

Wright, 1988: 3

The significance of this particular example of dependent development¹⁵ can be seen from the importance accorded down the years to the "sugar bloc" in the Philippine Congress. In spite of sugar's waning economic fortunes in Philippine exports during the 1980s¹⁶, the bloc was still able to muster a powerful voice within the landowners' lobby. It effectively blocked the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law (CARL) during the Aquino administration, for example (Putzel, 1992: 259 ff.).

The early patterns of coercion and exclusion of workers' interests adopted by Nicholas Loney in the 1860s have also been repeated since. Negros¹⁷ together with Panay and the rest of the Visayas have been significant centres of militarisation and resultant human rights violations during both the Marcos and Aquino regimes, mainly as a consequence of the poverty and social tensions attendant on the sugar *hacienda* economy, and the intransigence and violence of the landowners¹⁸. Many of these remain as entrenched members of a "core" national oligarchy, albeit now diversified into other major commercial and financial enterprises. They still have far greater influence than an interest exclusively tied to the fortunes of the sugar industry would otherwise command.

Barrington Moore's and Rueschemeyer's model of an anti-democratic landed bourgeoisie is amply borne out in Negros and Panay. The same rural landowning class, who as *ilustrados* used Philippine nationalism as a stick to beat the Spanish colonialists with, had, and have retained, a hostile, reactionary attitude to the possibility of any democratic alliances with the rural working class¹⁹. These two classes have remained essentially in conflict to the present day.

Philippine nationalism first found expression through an *ilustrado* literary martyr, Jose Rizal, a reformist writer who satirised the iniquities of Spanish colonialism²⁰. Even from its early days, the Philippine nationalist²¹ struggle has harnessed the power of the word persuasively as one strand of resistance to perceived oppression. After Rizal's martyrdom in 1896 his working class disciple, Andres Bonifacio,

transformed anti-colonial mobilisations into a more revolutionary movement, whose convoluted title is usually abbreviated to Katipunan. Bonifacio was replaced and subsequently executed after a leadership challenge by Emilio Aguinaldo, a Central Luzon *caudillo*²² and small landowner²³. Under Aguinaldo's forceful leadership, Filipinos "by their own military efforts broke the back of Spanish rule in the Philippines" (Schirmer and Shalom, 1987: 6), establishing on 23 January 1899 an independent republic.

Unfortunately for the proto-republicans their struggle virtually coincided with the arrival in the Philippines of US forces, in an extension of the Spanish-American War over Cuba. The US admiral, Dewey, reneged on a previous pact with Aguinaldo and moved to deny the Filipinos the fruits of their victory against their former Spanish colonisers (Constantino, 1975: 237-46). Instead, over the heads of Filipino leaders, the North Americans signed the Treaty of Paris with Spain, whereby the Philippines were ceded to the USA. Spain received \$20 million by way of compensation (Bonner, 1987: 28).

A new Filipino guerrilla resistance movement then fought against the Americans in the bloody and bitter Filipino-American War of 1899-1902. In this war:

[r]acial prejudice appears to have accentuated the cruel and brutal character of the US war of conquest, marked as it was by the use of torture, the killing of prisoners, and genocidal tendencies²⁴.

Schirmer and Shalom (1987: 7)

Yet scarcely had the dust of battle settled than members of the Philippine elite were queuing to collaborate with their new colonial masters (Constantino, 1975: 237-46, cited in Abueva, 1988: 37). Aguinaldo was the first. Within a month of his capture in April 1901, he had signed an oath of allegiance to the USA, and a declaration exhorting his former comrades to surrender. This self-serving capitulation understandably demoralised many guerrilla fighters and revolutionaries among the Filipino peasantry (Fast, 1973: 76).

Fast identifies the three class elements behind the 1898-1902 independence movement as: mestizo *ilustrados* drawn from the landowning *hacenderos*; the small middle class of urban professionals and state employees; and the Filipino *indio* peasantry. He points to a "successive defection by these first two classes, so that they then formed an alliance with US imperialism against the peasantry" (Fast, 1973: 73). Thus, even at this early date, a pattern of collaborators and oppositionists based on class had been established in Philippine politics.

4.4. The Oligarchy Consolidates: American Colonialism, 1902-42

Once submission was assured, US colonial rule of the Philippines subsequently became, at least on the surface, more benign than the brutality of its conquest (Friend, 1965: 9). The colonial administration attempted to win Filipino "hearts and minds" by despatching to the country large numbers of educators and missionaries including notably, for the first time, members of Protestant denominations (Abueva, 1988: 38), as a counterweight to the recognised predominance of the Roman Catholic church (Bonner, 1987: 29).

There was a conscious policy of "Americanisation" through the importation of "American values". From the 1920s onwards a general schooling drive introduced English as the principal medium of instruction. This resulted in higher standards of literacy and education than in many other colonial regimes of the period, and a fluency in English as an elite "national" language among middle and upper echelons of Philippine society²⁵. The effects of this "benign colonialism" still linger. The US colonial administration also encouraged the cooperation and co-optation of Filipino elites by enlisting them into the colonial bureaucracy, wherein lay lucrative state rewards. This helped to mould and reinforce a "rent-seeking", elite political culture of collaboration.

The wealthy *mestizo* class definitely benefitted from the American colonists' laissez-faire neglect of the welfare of the rural hinterlands. The absence of any substantial *urban* bourgeois fraction also had serious implications for the future of democratic organisations, as the *landed* bourgeoisie were able to insert and entrench themselves politically and economically in the colonial polity without serious opposition. With the acquiescence of the US colonial administration, the Philippine *mestizo* elite established the Nationalist Party (or, in Spanish, Nacionalistas) in 1907. They combined a muted nationalist rhetoric coupled with a collaborationist praxis which could appeal, at least in the abstract, to both the narrow land-owning electorate and an indulgent colonial administration²⁶. The Nacionalistas rapidly became the dominant Philippine party. From the late 1920s they were effectively a "government-in-waiting".

The party represented, and pursued, the interests of the landed oligarchy. Members of this privileged circle were able to increase their holdings enormously throughout the American period by the rapid acquisition of former Spanish friary lands. To encourage export commodity production, land was under-taxed, and its agricultural produce exempted from taxation entirely, by the US colonial administration. Thus wealth acquired through commerce and finance by the *comprador* oligarchs could be ploughed back into landholdings at bargain prices. Land acquisition in turn bolstered the rural landowners' political and economic power at the metropolitan centre, Manila, where pro-elite legislation ensured that the dispossession of the peasantry passed unchallenged²⁷. The numbers of landless burgeoned (Wright, 1988: 4).

The "national oligarchy", which both Constantino (1975) and Anderson (1988) describe being here created and consolidated, thus clearly saw their narrow class interest in the strengthening of their provincial economic bases, the *haciendas*; this was paralleled by political compliance with the new US Congress-style representational system in Manila. Anderson claims that this system:

proved perfectly adapted to the ambitions and social geography of the mestizo nouveaux riches. Their economic base lay in hacienda agriculture, not in the capital city. And their provincial fiefdoms were also protected by the country's immense linguistic diversity. They might all speak the elite, "national" language (Spanish, later American), but they all also spoke [...] a dozen other tongues. In this way competition in any given electoral district was effectively limited, in a pre-television age, to a handful of rival local caciques.

Anderson, 1988: 11

Economic dependency came to operate at the international level as these politically powerful landowners attuned their entrepreneurial energies to the requirements of the US colonial economy for the export of raw agricultural produce, such as sugar and copra²⁸. A further consequence of this dependent colonial economy was lack of industrial growth:

Industrialisation was not promoted because of the assumption of the Americans and the Filipino elite, in their mutual economic interest, that free trade, or the exchange of Philippine raw materials for American manufacturers, was equitable.

Abueva, 1988: 44.

Thus another strand of Philippine political culture was being woven into the tapestry: the political collaboration of the Filipino elites, here with the US colonial government, to consolidate their economic and political ascendancy, rather than any attempt at resistance to an externally-imposed political or economic hegemony. Elite collaboration with external actors for short-term economic and political gain has consistently taken precedence since colonial times in the Philippines, whatever the wider consequences to the nation as a whole might be - in this case economic dependency, stunted economic growth, and impoverishment of the rural base.

4.5. The Colonial Legacy

The radical Philippine historian Renato Constantino sums up the symbiotic alliance between the Philippine and US colonial elites thus:

The Americans had a two-fold interest in strengthening the Filipino elite. Economically, it was the landholdings of the elite that provided the raw materials which the Americans required. The demand for export crops was a powerful stimulus for more land purchase by landowners. [...] Politically, the landed elite constituted the most stable allies of American colonialism and many of them were recruited into office. Their prosperity gave them a definite stake in the colonial set-up.

Constantino, 1975: 306.

The requirements of the "colonial set-up" were entrenched in several powerful Trade Acts²⁹ which in effect laid the Philippine economy open to American commercial and financial exploitation through "parity rights"³⁰. In exchange, the economic power of Philippine landed oligarchs was further strengthened *within* the country. Yet in the international economy these inheritors of the colonial mantle were growing ever more dependent - on luxury and capital imports from the industrial West, funded by international trade; and on narrow international markets and externally-determined prices for their raw produce exports. This pattern replicates the experience of many Latin American countries in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Stephens, 1982, *passim*).

Philippine landed oligarchs benefitted, at least in the short term, from the dubious support these US trade concessions gave to a protected, and consequently inefficient and uncompetitive, plantation economy. This became heavily dependent on favourable US quota prices for commodities like sugar and copra. Thus was created a "double dependency", typically found among a number of twentieth century colonies³¹. As Hawes points out, the favourable treatment which Philippine sugar quotas obtained inside the US tariff wall were, at the same time, "largely effective in the cutting of Philippine trade with countries other than the US" (Hawes, 1987: 26). Not only did Philippine producers find themselves restricted in what products they could sell; they were also completely tied to the single country to which they could sell them profitably.

Partly as a consequence of this favourable treatment, pressure to grant - or even impose - full Philippine independence had been building throughout the early 1930s from lobby groups in the USA. It ranged from quasi-racist attacks by US trade unionists on Filipino immigrant labour as "non-assimilable Asiatics" (Doronila, 1992: 27), to outbursts by American beet-farm corporations owning sugar plantations and mills in Cuba (Fast, 1973: 77). The former saw immigration under the terms of Filipino "parity" as a threat to American labour, beset by Depression unemployment; the latter resented the free access of Philippine sugar to US markets in competition with their own (Doronilla, 1992: 26, Fast, 1973: 77-8).

Full Independence was therefore scheduled for 1945. Meanwhile from 1935 onwards, with the accession of the first and only [American] Commonwealth president - the "urbane, rascally mestizo", Manuel Quezon (Anderson, 1988: 13) - the Philippine elite were preparing to step fully into the shoes of their colonial masters. By this time they already filled most of the substantive posts of the colonial administration. The Nacionalistas, in what was virtual one-party rule

[...] maintained a monopoly of power and permitted Quezon to rule as a semi-dictator. While responsible ultimately to American authority, Quezon controlled domestic politics almost absolutely, making and breaking men's careers, transferring them from job to job, and sending them on junkets if they dared oppose him. Only a few spoke out against the "feared and detested oligarchy".

Steinberg, 1971: 13

Quezon established a pattern for his successors: acquiescence in US aims - a major one being maintenance of their military bases - in return for their economic and political support and a blind eye turned to his domestic misdeeds. These last basically amounted to wholesale plunder of the Philippine economy with the help of favoured oligarchs (Anderson, 1988: 12) under the auspices of a token "democracy"³². Here was an almost made-to-measure role model for the aspiring Marcos thirty years later. The cost of the US administration's laissez-faire attitude to what was in fact a totally undemocratic regime, was a rising tide of peasant unrest. Manuel Quezon, like presidents Elpidio Quirino, Ramon Magsaysay, Diosdado Macapagal and Ferdinand Marcos after him, sought appeasement through empty rhetoric and ineffectual gestures towards land reform; and, as later, the unrest burgeoned into a serious threat to the regime³³.

A comprehensively damning indictment of the economic and social legacy of American colonial policy is summed up by Owen:

Overdependence on a few exports, tenantry, indebtedness, low productivity, corruption and inefficiency, under-capitalization, miserable working conditions - all symptoms of economic backwardness were present at the end of the American period as they had been at the beginning.

Owen, 1972: 55, cited in Abueva.

The Commonwealth period abruptly came to an end in 1942 when the Japanese invaded the Philippines in promulgation of their Pacific War. By that time the Philippines' unequal economic and political relations with the US within the global economy was well-established. The exclusionary effects of the "ersatz" democracy encouraged under the Commonwealth period, the landgrabbing and concomitant dispossession of large swathes of the peasantry, and the corruption of many of the country's officials, were also exacerbating class conflicts. The oligarchy's economic short-termism and political near-sightedness would return to haunt the country in the post-war era.

4.6. Neo-colonialism in an "Ersatz" Democracy

The hiatus of the Japanese occupation from 1942 to 1946 both delayed self rule and, if anything, polarised Philippine society even further into "haves" and "have-nots". It was the lower classes³⁴ who bore the brunt of Japanese brutality. Most of the elite - and nearly half of the 1941 Philippine Congress - chose to collaborate, as their predecessors had done with the Spanish and American colonisers (Wurfel, 1988: 12). Japan's plans for an autarchic Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere resulted in severe shortages which fell most heavily, unsurprisingly, not on the elite collaborators but on the civilian population, which suffered extreme hardship throughout the occupation.

However, many of the collaborating elite were returned, with US acquiescence, as members of the post-Independence Congress. This first sat as a new legislature, after liberation from the Japanese, in 1946. As Leonard Davis has pointed out, "power was vested in the pre-war lords of [the] Philippine economy, with all the associated intrigue and corruption" that such political manipulations involved (Davis, 1987: 42). The ways in which the patterns of oligarchic dominance of Philippine economic and political life were consolidated or changed in the post-war period are considered in this section.

The Pacific War had been a conflict primarily waged between the US and Japan for Pacific - and East Asian - hegemony. It had taken a particularly heavy toll in the Philippines, both in the lives of courageous soldiers, anti-Japanese guerrillas and civilians, and in the sheer physical destruction of infrastructure and resources. The immediate post-war priority was clearly economic reconstruction. The Philippine elite conceived this automatically in terms of a dependency on US aid, and the Americans made their loans conditional upon the continuance of economic "parity rights" for US citizens in the newly-independent state. In the first elections of the newly-independent country, the Americans swung behind the compliant pro-US presidential candidate, Manuel Roxas, in spite of his collaborationist links³⁵.

In order to contest the elections, Roxas left the Nacionalistas to join the breakaway (but otherwise indistinguishable) Liberal Party, and with US backing he won. Using dubious political methods to exclude some of his more principled left-wing opponents from Congress, Roxas succeeded in pushing through the Constitutional amendment granting US parity rights, enshrined in the Bell Act of 1946 (Schirmer, 1987: 87-103). He confirmed his strongly pro-American stance by acceding in 1947 to US demands for a 99-year lease on 23 US military facilities, including the Clark Air Base near Angeles and the huge naval dockyard at Subic Bay (Wurfel, 1964: 761). Collectively these facilities became the US forward military base in Asia, from the Korean to the Vietnam Wars and beyond. They served throughout the period of the Cold War as a useful symbolic and concrete reminder to the USSR and China of the contestation for political and military hegemony in Asia³⁶. They remained for most of their lifespans alien territory over which Philippine law had no jurisdiction.

Thus from the first election of the independent Philippine state, and in the first significant debates of policies affecting its sovereignty, patterns were being established for the future. Firstly, and perhaps most significantly, there was US interference in a supposedly sovereign state's internal affairs to ensure the preservation of US economic and political interests. Secondly there was the domestic electoral outcome of what was plainly no more than personal political ambition: the creation of a "cloned" elite party, the Liberals, with a political programme no different from the original Nacionalistas, other than to promote the interests of a rival fraction of the oligarchy. Politicians, including presidential candidates, would continue to shuttle between the two parties at will, right through to the Marcos era³⁷. Thirdly was the exclusion, from a constitutional debate, of the more principled opposition; instead, a legalistic outcome

favoured by the president and US hegemonic interests was forced through Congress, to the accompaniment of rhetoric extolling the Philippines' "special relationship" with its former coloniser-turned-mentor.

This was a strategy adopted repeatedly by successive presidents: a formally correct procedure lent spurious legitimacy to a policy facing popular opposition, whilst patently unfair means were employed to exclude criticism. Given the fraudulent nature of most Philippine elections, it can also be seen, *pace* Hadenius, how unreliable universal suffrage is as an indicator of "the democratic will". In the Philippine context the electoral process was not infrequently "captured" by what Anderson (1988), among others, has labelled *caciquism*³⁸.

The Philippines therefore emerged after independence as an "ersatz" democracy³⁹, with the trappings of democratic freedoms. These included rotating parties (the Nacionalistas and their off-shoot "opposition" party, the Liberals), organisational freedoms and a "free press". However, the effectiveness of many of these trappings was minimal during the two decades in which the two political parties shared power. Their political programmes were virtually indistinguishable and unashamedly elitist, despite populist rhetoric at election time.

Policies in both parties were determined less by long-term considerations, political ideology or principle, than by the *ad hoc* exigencies of the party machine and its corrupt system of appointments, of "pork barrel" (see below), and of graft for short-term gain. Political outcomes were generally to the benefit of one of the rival fractions of the oligarchy and their allies in the embryonic urban bourgeoisie. Government strategies were more tied to US requirements for overseas investment and raw commodity exports than they were to genuine development for the Philippines: the "neo-colonial" mentality of the Philippine ruling elite would not be easily shaken off. Conversely elite stalling over even the most minimal land reforms was already becoming habitual. The unassuaged "land hunger" of the rural dispossessed fed the Huk Rebellion of the late 1940s and early '50s⁴⁰. This movement had evolved from anti-Japanese and anti-landlord resistance during the war. It now grew into a struggle of rural peasants, in alliance with a scattering of left-wing urban intellectuals, against landed elites in Central Luzon.

The Huks' basically reformist demands included land redistribution and an end to landlord control of courts and government. They provided the first post-Independence exemplar to the popular classes of the effectiveness of organised and violent resistance to coercion from above, whether in the form of Japanese occupiers or of repressive elite landowners. Since Katipunan and the Filipino-American War at the turn of the century there had been sporadic outbursts of discontent, largely from peasant workers. Yet the Huks had a more cogent socialist programme, persisted longer than previous uprisings, and clearly gave the newly independent state and its American guardians cause for serious anxiety (Kerkvliet, 1977; Schirmer and Shalom, 1987: 105-123).

4.7. *Oligarchs and Caciques: the State as Patron*

The previous sections have indicated a few of the historical reasons for structural features of the Philippine post-war polity. Subsequent sections will consider how these features were consolidated or developed through the 1950s and 1960s, and how they gave rise to the apparently endemic failure by successive Philippine governments to generate either sustained economic growth or political stability. They will examine the ways in which the essentially undemocratic processes of elite decision-making exacerbated social and political conflict, without creating state institutions or mechanisms which could deal with them effectively.

The independent Philippine state has from its inception rested securely on a clientelistic system of top-down patronage, whose intention and effect has been to exclude the subaltern classes from real political decision-making, and to divert demands for a more equitable distribution of the nation's wealth. Patronage has permeated all levels of government and economic life. It has been a means of consolidating dependent economic relations between unequal allies within the economic, social and political hierarchies (Anderson, 1988).

For those who secured office through the increasingly fraudulent electoral system, the plundering of state coffers by local *cacique* incumbents was seen in the main as "reward" for the initial "outlay" engendered by the expense of electioneering. Thus electoral politics, far from strengthening democracy, underpinned a clientelism which rewarded political venality among the ruling clique. In rural areas most constituencies were seen as "in the gift" of a few rival *cacique* families. Any individual replacements that subsequent elections might throw up simply repeated a similarly venal pattern with new, or "recycled", faces. "Pork barrel" - the limited funds available for "public works" at local level - oiled the political machine; deriving from the US system of political patronage, it became one instrument of the institutionalisation of a patron-client relationship in which the patron, increasingly, was the state.

Public office was thus seen as but another means to further general rent-seeking activities. These could be achieved through the "legislative appropriation" of favourable terms of trade accorded by the state - the protection of fledgling Philippine industries within high tariff walls, for example - or the circumvention of import duties and quotas for favoured elite fractions. They could also be "siphoned off" directly by misappropriating funds intended for state investment in public works ("pork barrel"), industry, agriculture or finance.

Thus the potential of the 1950s was rapidly squandered in ill-planned and poorly-executed economic opportunism. This resulted merely in short-term profiteering and aggrandisement for the elite few, at the

expense of any long-term national economic investment or substantive growth. Anderson has characterised the period 1954-1972⁴¹ as the "full heyday of cacique democracy":

The oligarchy faced no serious domestic challenges. [...] Under the guise of promoting economic independence and import-substitution industrialization, exchange rates were manipulated, monopolistic licences parcelled out, huge, cheap, often unrepaid bank loans passed around, and the national budget frittered away in pork barrel legislation. Some of the more enterprising dynasties diversified into urban real estate, hotels, utilities, insurance, the mass media, and so forth.

Anderson, 1988: 16. Emphasis added.

None of these "diversifications" - based almost exclusively on tertiary industries, and heavily reliant on rent-seeking and profit-taking rather than substantive investment - could, however, be said to contribute to a solid industrial base for a new post-colonial nation⁴².

4.8. The Philippine Presidency, 1946-65

The concentration of powers at central state level, both in the presidency and national legislature, accrued from the predominant emphasis on comprador import-export trade. Tariffs, import licences, and regulation of import and excise duties, for example, were under the effective control, if not direct jurisdiction, of either the executive or legislative arms of the state. The president became the ultimate patron, dispensing economic and political favours to those who had financially and politically supported him at election time. The presidential elections thus became a quadrennial auction where "winner-takes-all", available to the bidder able to offer the highest persuasive-monetary and coercive-intimidatory inducements to a susceptible and vulnerable electorate. Anderson has described this "system" more generally as "politics in a well-run casino" (Anderson, 1988: 30).

The powers of the president were growing as the Philippine state became steadily more centralised. Even in Quezon's time the Philippine presidency had appeared less constrained by checks from the legislature and other formal institutions than its US prototype. Of the first five presidents of the independent Philippines (Roxas, 1946-48; Quirino, 1948-53; Magsaysay, 1953-57; Garcia, 1957-61; Macapagal, 1961-65)⁴³ three were drawn from elite *cacique* families; Magsaysay and Macapagal were the exceptions. Magsaysay came from the Philippine equivalent of a "kulak" family, and only Macapagal, according to Davis, was "a man from a very poor background" (Davis, 1987: 44).

The ever increasing outlay for electioneering - to provide "guns, goons and gold" in the popular Philippine catchphrase - meant that only those with substantial funds, organisation, and frequently a private army (the "goons" in the above equation)⁴⁴ could afford to run for high office. This is certainly

not the condition of equal access stipulated in the formal requirements for "fair elections" (Hadenius, 1992).

Although Ramon Magsaysay did not come directly from the elite oligarchy, his was "one of his *barrio*'s most prosperous families which, apart from owning various firms, controlled a tenanted farm of over 1000 acres" (Goodno, 1991: 45). He was therefore not the simple, barefoot "man of the masses" that later propaganda portrayed him as (*ibid.*)⁴⁵. As Secretary of National Defense in the Quirino regime from 1950 to 1953, Magsaysay had the full backing of the US military and the CIA⁴⁶, to pursue psychological and military warfare against the Huks. This he did by revitalising the armed forces, offering them among other inducements liberal "cash incentives" for Huk corpses. The propaganda machinery was employed, under the Civil Affairs Office (CAO), to organise anti-communist forums and distribute printed material throughout the state educational system. The media and press were assiduously courted and fed "black propaganda" about the Huks, alongside the heroic exploits of Magsaysay himself (Schirmer and Shalom, 1987: 115).

Through an informer, the entire PKP (Philippine Communist Party) politburo - which formed the Huk leadership - was captured in Manila in October 1950. Magsaysay then persuaded President Quirino to suspend *habeus corpus* for the next two years. As a consequence, over a thousand people were held without charge; others were charged for insurrection; beatings were considered normal procedure for extracting information (*ibid.*: 117). These were similar to the tactics and procedures which Marcos was to adopt under Martial Law over twenty years later, to tackle his own "communist insurrection". Marcos's operation was on a far larger scale - but it was far less effective than Magsaysay's in curbing the rebels.

Magsaysay's (and the CIA's) effective containment of the Huks by 1953⁴⁷ ensured that "overnight, he became a legend as the saviour of democracy and hope of the masses" (Francisco and Arriola, 1987: 140). When it came to fighting the 1953 presidential elections, Magsaysay did not have the government's financial resources available to the incumbent, President Quirino. He profited instead, during the expensive electioneering, from US backing and funds - channelled through his friends at the CIA. Not without warrant did he become known as "America's Boy". As president, Magsaysay delivered to US capital - individual companies and multinationals alike - an export-oriented economy (sugar, plus other agricultural raw commodities) combined with a liberal import regime which stymied any incipient industrial growth by domestic investment. The career of Magsaysay thus epitomises several of the strands in the post-war Philippine polity: anti-communism, economic dependence on the US, and a preference for economic policies dominated by considerations of elite interests and expediency.

Partly because of the predilection for *comprador* commerce and international capital, investment in the Philippines was seen chiefly as instrumental in creating "rent wealth" for the few domestic beneficiaries

of "liberalised trade", rather than the nation as a whole (Yoshihara, 1988: 71, 77, 110, and passim). Successive governments therefore saw as their priority the advancement of the interests of the elites' natural allies, the international bourgeoisie (represented in the Magsaysay era by US corporations and multinationals).

4.9. State Interventions and the Political Economy

According to Hamilton (1987) land-rent ownership, usury, commodity speculation, extravagant consumption, overseas bank accounts and the corruption attendant on rent-seeking activities, have all been prevalent in the post-colonial Philippines (Hamilton, 1987: 1240-1). Like Moore and Rueschemeyer, Hamilton believes that a Third World state, in order to develop effectively, should be free of the baleful political influence of the landlord classes - and adds to that list speculators, money-lenders, the military⁴⁸ (in alliance with reactionary forces), and "foreign interests inimical to industrial development" (ibid.: 1243).

However, he goes on to disassociate these requirements from political democracy: if the state is "sufficiently strong" then "[s]tate power may be democratically or undemocratically based". This of course begs the essential question of whether an "actually-existing" state can ever be "sufficiently independent from particular class interests" to "promote accumulation at the expense of other interests" (ibid.). It *may* have been the case in post-war Taiwan and South Korea under unique, political conjunctures⁴⁹; it has patently *not* been the case during the same period in the Philippines where the old landed oligarchy, as we have seen, remained very much in place.

The same oligarchic clans and individual families have often expanded into several of the sectors of the modern economy: export-oriented agribusiness, logging and mining; *comprador* import-export trade; finance, realty, and the tertiary and manufacturing sectors. They have also been prepared to transfer wealth between their various operations for short-term gain (Yoshihara, 1988: 68 ff). Yet the pattern of their economic performance in the post-war years has produced an overall effect of stasis rather than any sustained dynamism, particularly when compared to the neighbouring economies of ASEAN⁵⁰.

In spite of their apparent power as patrons, Philippine presidents before Marcos were hostage in broader policy-making terms to the power of the oligarchs, to the dependent economy, and internationally, to US economic and political interests. These last included the foreign policy strategies involving the military bases and Cold War anticommunism. The bogeyman of "communism" has often been used rhetorically to resist demands and pressures from below, as in the case of Magsaysay's populism.

The Philippine state instead relied heavily on a formalistic "rule of law" to legitimise - at least in the eyes of the oligarchy's charmed circle - what were in fact very undemocratic economic and political institutions and policy-making practices. In short, *caciquism* permeated the legislative and administrative arms of the state at both national and local levels, perpetuating clientelism in an increasingly centralised and corrupt system.

Among other key institutions, the church was, and remains, 80% Roman Catholic. Before Marcos and Martial Law it was generally conservative, apolitical - and quite content to collaborate with the regime in power. After 1965 and "Vatican II"⁵¹, however, local ranks of priests and nuns became "conscientised" along the lines of Latin American "liberation theology", setting up Basic Christian Communities (BCCs) to help the poor whom the Philippine state had consistently neglected. The military, by contrast, was modelled on the US military and its key officers were trained at West Point⁵². By the time of Marcos's accession in 1965, however, they were underfunded and demoralised.

The state which emerged in the mid- to late-60s proved highly susceptible to Marcos's determined manipulations. In civil society many unresolved social, economic and political tensions had intensified. They in turn gave rise to a vigorous though divided opposition, reflected in the increasingly vociferous criticism of Marcos's policies in the elite English-language press. However, the imposition of Martial Law in 1972 effectively silenced all such opposition, at least in the short-term.

The abiding impression of the Philippine elite's management of the economy and polity is that rent-seeking and short-termism have frequently led to unproductive elite rivalries; economic fragmentation; lack of sustained investment or technical expertise; and consequent acquiescence in fundamentally damaging economic policies imposed by foreign interests (Yoshihara, 1988: 111-113; 130-131). The Philippine ruling class has apparently been happy to collaborate, on an alarming scale, in the pillage of the country's agricultural, mineral, forestry, and fishery resources, and the exploitation of its citizens' low-wage labour (including a massive, and socially damaging, export of overseas workers).

Imports, as an indicator of dependency, have significantly increased since the 1950s. Their imbalance with export earnings had already weakened the Philippine economy long before Marcos's arrival. Balance-of-payments crises, often acute, started in the late 1940s and have continued ever since (Pineda-Ofreneo, 1986: 4). Foreign debt has therefore been a long-term and growing problem, and, with it, currency instability and successive (though rarely successful) devaluations. Inflation; problems of capital liquidity and investment financing and structural unemployment have followed in its wake.

Constantino (1978) points out that since the beginning of the Macapagal administration (1961-65), when deregulation of the Philippine economy was pursued with a vengeance, the Philippines has effectively been in a "debt trap". This has meant a permanent dependence on US-dominated financial institutions⁵³,

principally the IMF, whose will has by and large prevailed in Philippine economic policies ever since (Constantino, 1978: 114).

4.10. The Philippine Class Structure: Compradors and Competition

Urbanisation and industrialisation, uneven though they have been, have gradually eroded the power bases of the landed oligarch and the traditional rural patronage networks. Increasingly the state has taken over the role of key patron, at least in dispensing jobs in the public sector. This economic restructuring has in turn given rise to gradually changing class formations in the post-war period. However, the colonial heritage and the subsequent uneven development of the post-war Philippine economy created a deeply divided society. On the one hand was a pro-US, anti-communist, "Manila-centric" urban elite, increasingly estranged from their rural economic bases (the *haciendas* and domestically-owned plantations). On the other were the impoverished rural and urban majority. According to the rhetoric of "ersatz" democracy the latter were supposedly the electoral constituents of the former; yet the elite classes have remained largely unresponsive to the economic or political needs of the majority, in spite of the periodic ritual of "democratic elections".

The brief attempt at Import Substitution Industrialisation (ISI) in the late 1950s might in theory have created potentially rival bourgeois fractions. In fact, in the face of the intransigence of foreign and domestic *comprador* fractions, ISI patently failed in the medium- and long-term to create a substantive, indigenously-owned industrial base. Moreover it was often the oligarch families themselves who diversified economically by penetrating into industrial ventures during this ISI period. It was they who by the 1960s still represented the country's main domestic agricultural, commercial and even industrial economic interests - all virtually included within the same oligarch groupings. For example, some of the wealthiest "old Spanish" and mestizo families moved out from their rural *hacienda* bases into urban real estate (Ayala and Ortigas in Manila); or shipping (Aboitiz in Cebu); or food processing (Soriano and the San Miguel Brewery conglomerate); or public utilities (the Lopez clan and Meralco, the Manila Electric Company). Doronila (1992) maintains that

[...] "old money" based on agriculture and commerce [...] formed a significant portion of the capital in industry. [...] This bifurcation of interests fostered opportunism and flexibility in alliance building [...]. The mixture of new and old interests within the entrepreneurial bourgeoisie prevented the development of an autonomous class with clearly delineated interests from those of the landlords [...].

Doronila, 1992: 111.

Thus by the mid-1960s when Marcos came to power there was still no self-contained, urban-based bourgeoisie with an unambiguous class interest in vigorously promoting the project of industrialisation. Such a class might have been tempted to ally itself with sectors of the working classes in the kind of

formations described by Barrington Moore and Rueschemeyer, with the consequent possibility of "genuine" democratisation - or, at the very least, economic and social reform. Such a mobilisation, alas, when it came in the late 1960s and early 1970s, was too tenuous and too late to counteract Marcos's own plans for "authoritarian democracy" - that is, his continued rule - under the pretext of "modernisation".

The reason for this political stagnation is basically to do with the depth of particular class entrenchments in a nation's economy and polity. Szeftel (1987) has shown that "[t]he most profound influence in the various phases and forms by which capital has impinged upon the Third World has been that of merchant capital" (Szeftel, 1987: 109). He maintains that, for the mass of rural people in the Third World, the transformation from economic self-sufficiency to dependency has created all "the problems of debt, poverty and hunger [which] are rooted in the character of this transformation and the legacy of merchant capital" (Szeftel, 1987: 112). That legacy, which we have documented in the Philippine case, has generated the unequal economic and political distribution of power associated with endemic underdevelopment.

To sum up, what I have referred to throughout as the Philippine oligarchy was formed historically by the *comprador* class, deriving mainly from eighteenth and nineteenth century *mestizo* export-import traders (Anderson, 1988). These *compradors* were able in the late Spanish and American colonial periods to transfer much of their wealth into land where it gave them both economic power and political prestige. However, they continued to maintain their class interests in their traditional source of wealth which was "entrepot trade", essentially of raw commodities dependent on the requirements of, and terms of trade set by, their colonial masters.

Since independence the *comprador*-oligarchs have been unable to shake free as a class from their faith in commodity exports as a form of satisfactory wealth accumulation, in spite of all the global evidence to the contrary. Conversely because in the Philippines the oligarchy has been the dominant economic and political force, certainly up until the late 1960s, its members have held the Philippine economy in thrall to their narrow class interests. They have also been among the major beneficiaries of any opportunities to diversify economically, such as the aborted attempts at ISI in the late 1950s.

As a class fraction the Philippine *comprador*-oligarchs are particularly well-entrenched. They have had over a century to promote their class interests, virtually untrammelled by other fractional interests. Those which might potentially have opposed them, such as the state bureaucracy or urban-industrial bourgeoisie, have in fact often been co-terminous.

Such a state is painfully dependent upon the vagaries of international markets, whilst remaining domestically governed by a class unable to accumulate investment wealth for economic diversification. Long-term economic contradictions persistently resurface. Economic crisis in turn generates political

instability which the state tries to resolve by coercion and the repressive legislation used to quash mass mobilisations. This was the case with the Sakdalista and Huk rebellions in the 1930s and 1950s respectively. State repression in those periods set the pattern for Martial Law in the 1970s, with elite class and state obduracy exacerbating tensions into open conflict.

Marcos, it should be recognised, had - at least initially - endorsed an economic project which, despite its dubious motivation, was at least different from that of the traditional oligarchy. That "dubious motivation" was, of course, his personal political agenda - to seize and concentrate the nation's political and economic power for his own personal interest. Yet the established *caciques* blocked his way. In order to displace the landed *comprador*-oligarchy, he had first to organise a new political pact among newly-created elite players. These would then, in client-patronage terms, be directly beholden to him alone. This was the manoeuvre which Marcos - the "supreme cacique" in Anderson's phrase (Anderson, 1988: 17) - carried out in 1972. It depended on the active complicity of the majority of the military command, and the passive acquiescence of the international bourgeoisie. These latter were represented largely by US multinationals and finance capitalists. They had been bolstered, under the Macapagal regime (1961-65), by the edicts on "free trade" which international finance agencies like the IMF had insisted on. As a class fraction, thanks to "US parity", the international economic actors in the Philippines formed a "significant element of the dominant classes" vis-a-vis the oligarchs.

As Szeftel described, for certain "new" fractions of a fledgling local industrial bourgeoisie:

[...]the prospect of escaping from the primary-producer level of dependence to this higher form [of technologically more advanced investment] was attractive to many. [...] The prospect that international capital might play a progressive role in the Third World and so finally create the basis for a sustained accumulation process seemed at least a welcome relief [...].

Szeftel, 1987: 113-6

In order to mediate amongst the squabbling fractions of the domestic ruling class and promote the project of economic accumulation, Thomas (1984) maintains, the peripheral development state must have a "certain amount of social space" (Thomas, 1984: 69) - what Marx and earlier Marxists referred to as "Bonapartism" (Marx, 1852/1975), or what has been more recently described as "relative autonomy" (Poulantzas, 1973; Skocpol, 1979). This space was effectively created in the Philippine case by Marcos, admittedly for his own divergent agenda, with the imposition of Martial Law. In general terms, Rueschemeyer and Evans' (1985) observation holds for the Philippines as elsewhere:

The interrelations between the various parts of the state apparatus, on the one hand, and the most powerful classes or class factions, on the other, will determine the character of the overall "pact of domination".

Rueschemeyer and Evans, 1985: 47.

This pact arose in the Philippines in response to changes during the late 1960s caused by the burden of unsustainable economic tensions. The Philippine mass media recorded these changes on behalf of certain competing classes and fractions. It is to the Philippine media's own roles and identities in the post-war period, therefore - particularly in relation to social classes - that we now turn.

4.11. The Role of the Philippine Media, 1946-65

The pre-1972 Philippine press has been described more than once - with reservations - as "the freest press in Asia, if not the world" (Rosenberg, 1973: 53 ff.; Lowenstein, 1976, cited in Dresang, 1985: 34; Lent, 1978: 176; Shafer, 1991: 6). The 1935 Constitution had guaranteed, conventionally, that "no law shall be passed abridging freedom of speech and of the press"; and the pre-war Philippine press, consisting in the main of English-language newspapers owned by Americans and a sprinkling of the indigenous elite, had been notably "lively". Set against this supposed "freedom", however, it should be remembered that most of these newspapers could only be regularly afforded and understood by the urban upper and middle classes who were educated, wealthy, English- and/or Spanish-speaking. The market for newspapers even by the late-1960s was still only roughly one million out of a population, then, of over 30 million; 60% of this mass circulation was in Manila; similar figures applied for magazines (Maslog, 1990: 26).

The predominance of English in the Philippine print media is illustrated in the figures for the number of journalists: in 1968, out of a total of 1193 print journalists, only 116 wrote in Pilipino⁵⁴; 986 wrote in English (Philippine Mass Media Directory, 1968, cited in *ibid.*). Since the press, radio and television are above all representational media, any claim of "freedom" must be qualified by answers to the questions: freedom to report what, to represent whom, and in whose interests?

The answers in the Philippine case must inevitably revolve around the freedom of wealthy oligarchs and other elite media owners to set their private media agendas. These included the freedom to attack - or, as the process is generally referred to in the Philippines, "hit" - their economic and political rivals, within the constraints of the libel laws. This was a freedom for which several among the Filipino elite were prepared to meet the substantial costs of setting up their own newspapers.

If one compares this situation with, say, neighbouring Malaysia or Singapore with their draconian press laws⁵⁵, it is clear that the press in the post-war Philippines was far freer of *government control* than many other countries, certainly in Asia. The point at issue, in the context of the media's role in democratisation, is whether freedom from governmental legal constraints has been, and is, *sufficient* to facilitate media representation of a genuine diversity of "voices". These, it will be recalled, are assumed by a number of commentators to be necessary in the "public sphere" to guarantee political choice and

public accountability to the electorate, and to present a plurality of rational alternatives to their decision-makers (Habermas, 1962; Miliband, 1969, 1992; Murdoch, 1992).

The post-Independence Philippine press had inherited most of its professional standards and traditions from American journalism, which had prevailed, unsurprisingly, in the pre-war colonial Manila press. These traditions were a rough approximation of Siebert's "libertarian" model (Siebert, 1956; see Chapter Three); there was little evidence of the "social responsibility" which was being newly advocated during the 1950s in the USA itself. In short, the Philippine press contained many - some said, too many - of the more populist and sensationalist elements of the American "yellow press" (Shafer, 1991: 3).

After the censorious restrictions of the Japanese occupation, the immediate post-war period saw a proliferation of newspapers (Pineda-Ofreneo, 1986: 15). Within months this "hunger for news" had stabilised, to support 21 dailies and 16 "leading magazines" (Maslog, 1990: 24). Some newspaper titles continued to be owned by Americans; others had been, from their inception, in the hands of Filipinos like the Roces family; but there were also some more recent entrants from Filipino oligarch interests. These either, like the Sorianos and Elizaldes, consolidated and expanded their pre-war holdings, or, like the Lopezes, embarked on a new but aggressive penetration of the market.

The Philippine elite family most committed to the press as entrepreneurs were the Roces clan, who had been in the Philippine newspaper business continuously from 1916 onwards. Alejandro Roces Sr. had in 1925 established the influential "TVT" mainstream newspaper empire of the *Tribune* (English-language), *La Vanguardia* (Spanish), and *Taliba (Tagalog)*. After the war the family expanded with the launch of the *Evening News*, Manila's first afternoon newspaper; other family members brought out the *Daily Star* and *Pilipino Star*. In addition to the *Daily Mirror* and some weekend and women's magazine titles, Alejandro's son, Ramon Roces established the weekly magazine *Graphic*, and relaunched a bevy of vernacular magazines including *Liwayway*, which has retained its relative popularity to this day (Pineda-Ofreneo, 1986: 33; 128). Other Roces magazines had specific provincial language appeal⁵⁶, in the Visayas, Ilocos and Bicol, for example.

Most importantly Ramon Roces revived the *Manila Times* after the liberation in September 1945. Given the boost of the established Roces distribution network, it quickly built up a circulation of around 200,000, compared to its nearest rivals, the *Manila Chronicle*, the *Manila Bulletin* and the *Philippines Herald* which had only roughly a third of that circulation each in the mid-1960s (Pineda-Ofreneo, 1986: 130). None of the Philippine-language dailies could compete on this scale - the largest was *Taliba* at 25,000 with only 5% of total circulation (*ibid.*: 130).

These post-war newspapers and periodicals might describe themselves as "free", but there were few, with certain honourable exceptions, that were truly "independent". There had been a fragile tradition of

"oppositional" newspapers, which had allowed themselves criticism of the regime in power and its incumbents. A "courageous handful" had been active from the Spanish period onwards - *La Solidaridad*, *La Independencia* and *La Libertad* had all supported the 1898 Filipino rebellion against the Spanish colonial authorities. The early "revolutionary spirit" was continued during the American Period by *El Renacimiento* ("Rebirth"), "a very nationalistic newspaper" which became famous because of its "intellectual and aggressive staff" (Maslog, 1975, cited in Shafer, 1991: 5).

This critical "independent" tradition was continued for a short time after 1945 by a handful of "brave new papers" (Pineda-Ofreneo, 1986: 24; 29; 60-62) with owners like Manuel F. Manahan. He perhaps exemplified the ambivalent ideological and political stance of many of the media owners drawn essentially from the Filipino elite. Manahan had belonged to the anti-Japanese "President Quezon's Own Guerrillas" (PQOG), and had helped to publish an underground newspaper, the *Liberator*, during the Japanese occupation. Yet a decade later, in the 1957 presidential elections he stood as a pro-American candidate, and even received some financial support from the CIA "for old time's sake" (Pineda-Ofreneo, 1986: 63), so he was by no means a detached observer of the Philippine political scene. However he brought out three small publications after the war as owner-publisher: the *Philippine Liberty News*, *Bagong Buhay* (in Tagalog), and *Voz de Manila* (in Spanish). All three gained a reputation for employing outspoken editors and hard-hitting column writers. Indalecio Soliongco and Arsenio Lacson, editor and leading columnist respectively of the *Philippine Liberty News*, were perhaps the most notable.

Their outspokenness soon incurred the displeasure of advertisers, however, and the *Philippine Liberty News* in 1947 met the fate of many small newspapers the world over - it collapsed from lack of revenue. *Bagong Buhay* was sold shortly afterwards to the Roces clan "for a song", and *Voz de Manila* struggled on, heavily subsidised by the wealthy Spanish community (Pineda-Ofreneo, 1986: 29-30; 60).

Another small Filipino-owned newspaper, the *Manila Post*, whose mission was to be "an independent, progressive and militant organ of public opinion" won a considerable victory for the Philippine press in general by taking a principled stand on the protection of its sources for a controversial article it had published, and this protection passed into law in October 1946. Sadly, the *Manila Post* itself was forced to close in November 1947 (*ibid.*: 10).

Only one "small press" newspaper survived through to the 1960s: *Bullseye*, set up in 1951 as a "hard-hitting and muckraking" weekly tabloid (Pineda-Ofreneo, 1986: 61). It had a peak circulation of around 9,000, but fell quickly to around 5,000. These figures, and *Bullseye's* claim to "independence", belie a harsher reality however: *Bullseye* actually had a mere 265 subscribers; the remaining copies were given away to congressmen or disposed of through street sales. Financially *Bullseye* was in fact heavily dependent on *cacique* friends like the *Philippines Herald* publisher, Vicente Madrigal, and Eugenio Lopez, owner of the *Manila Chronicle*. As Pineda-Ofreneo remarks:

Bullseye was a beneficiary of big business and might therefore be assumed to be useful in some way to its benefactors, perhaps as a credible channel for hitting political enemies.

Pineda-Ofreneo, 1986: 62.

This situation - and related considerations of "credibility", "opposition", "independence" and "viability" - will be worth bearing in mind when we come to scrutinise the position of the "alternative" press in the 1980s. In the long term, it would appear, only newspapers with substantial financial backing can survive and grow, and this often leaves them beholden to their capitalist backers.

In general, therefore, any claims of "independence" should be examined critically. Another example of an "independent" periodical shows how the "dominant ideology" of *cacique* capitalism could override the internal workings of individual media organs. The influential English-language weekly, the *Philippines Free Press*, had a liberal reputation. It was, nonetheless, committedly pro-American and "anti-communist" - to the extent that in the Spanish civil war it had sided openly with Franco. Its subsequent championing of democracy and civil liberties were therefore somewhat compromised.

Its original American owner died in 1960 and the *Philippines Free Press* came into Filipino hands. The Locsin family who took it over also had a "liberal" reputation. Only in 1970, however, for the first time in the *Free Press's* 62-year-old history, did radical journalists on the periodical try to establish a trade union. The response was far from "liberal". The union organisers were so harassed by Locsin and his agents that they were forced to resign (Original Interview [O/I]: Lacaba). The Locsins' editorial "championing of democracy", and civil rights in general, clearly did not extend to their own workers' right to organise. Their handling of this case revealed, more sharply than general claims to "liberal values", how their "anti-communism" applied to concrete issues.

By the early 1960s the Philippine mainstream press had contracted significantly. It was now securely concentrated in the hands of the monied few (*ibid.*: 58).

4.12. The Philippine Press, 1965-93: an Overview

By the end of the central period under consideration in this thesis (1965-93), the total number of print publications in the Philippines was 458 (Philippine Media Factbook, 1993; *IBON Facts and Figures*, "Press Release", vol.19/11, 15 June 1996). Many of these titles were, however, non-news periodicals; in the Manila region alone they included comics (84), magazines (23) and Pilipino-language tabloids (15). There was also a large provincial output of newspapers and periodicals - 319 titles in all (*ibid.*).

This survey will focus largely on the major English-language national broadsheets, all published in Manila. Of these only the top four in 1993 were making a profit. This confirms a generally-held

hypothesis (*see Chapters Five and Seven*) that the majority of Philippine broadsheets are not published by their owners purely as capitalist profit-oriented enterprises. Rather they are seen as an instrument to protect their owners' other business interests - to fight *for* economic and political privileges and *against* the interests of rival entrepreneurs.

This had already been noted during the Marcos regime, but in the post-EDSA period the pattern was confirmed and strengthened by the entry of newcomers, the *parvenu* "ethnic Chinese" businessmen who had risen to economic prominence during the later Marcos years (Pineda-Ofreneo, 1986: 123-9; 230; *see also Chapter Seven*).

The central period under consideration falls, from the perspective of media ownership and control, into three distinct phases:

- I. The pre-Martial Law Period (1965-1972).
- II. The Martial Law Period (1972- 1981) and the pre-EDSA "Liberalisation" Period (1981-86).
- III. The post-EDSA "Democratic Transition" Period (1986-93).

The patterns of ownership of the leading mainstream press titles during each of these periods are clearly delineated:

- I. Old oligarch families (*see Table 2a*).
- II. Marcos cronies (*see Table 2b*).
- III. Oligarch "returnees" **plus** former "mosquito" press owners **plus** *parvenu* "new business" owners (*see Table 2c*).

However during the "liberalisation" period, between Ninoy Aquino's assassination in 1983 and EDSA in 1986, a major challenge to the "Marcos crony" mainstream press came from "mosquito" alternatives. These will be dealt with at length as a separate phenomenon elsewhere (*see Table 4, Chapter Six*). It is sufficient to note here, in the context of the mainstream press, that the "mosquito" alternatives initially had small circulations which, however, built rapidly between 1984 and 1986 to prepare the way for the ascendancy of new titles in the post-EDSA period (*see Table 2c*). The predominance of *oligarch* owners which prevailed before Martial Law has thereby, since EDSA, been considerably eroded. With this in mind we may examine in detail the three specific periods in question.

4.13. I. The pre-Martial Law Period (1965-1972).

Between 1965 and 1972, from the time of Marcos's first presidency to the beginning of Martial Law, the major broadsheets were dominated by four "multi-media networks" (press plus radio plus television networks). These were owned by four major oligarch families: Lopez, Soriano, Roces and Elizalde. (One other proprietor, Hans Menzi, owned the longest-established Philippine paper, the *Daily Bulletin*, which had then the third largest daily circulation.) Each family had integrated facilities covering newspapers, radio and television broadcasting. Maslog points out that by 1972, on the eve of Martial Law, five families alone controlled about 90% of the country's mass media (Maslog, 1990: 27)⁵⁷.

Together these families had all to a greater or lesser degree, and at different periods, bought into the American-dominated pre-war media. In the context of what has been said about the general post-war political economy, these oligarch enterprises lay mostly within the non-traditional service sector. Insofar as newspaper ownership existed primarily to protect and extend economic and political privileges for their owners they can accurately be subsumed under "rent-seeking" activities.

The Roces clan were the oldest Philippine "press barons", with a pre-war newspaper chain which after the war retained a sizeable share of the press market, including magazines and vernacular publications. They had originally concentrated their entrepreneurial interests in newspapers - the pre-war chain "TVT" (see above), which the next generation expanded into periodicals (weekly magazines) and comics⁵⁸. By 1966 their *Manila Times* led the broadsheets with a circulation of 186,000 (Pineda-Ofreneo, 1986: 130). They also owned the *Daily Mirror*, which with its modest circulation of 40,000, came fifth in the English-language press circulation stakes. The family had other media interests too, in broadcasting: their Associated Broadcasting network owned five radio and one television station. However their wider business interests extended to real estate, race clubs, cinemas, lumber, banking, construction, oil and mining (*ibid.*).

Next in circulation after the *Times*, with 74,000, came the *Manila Chronicle*, owned by the Lopez dynasty. The *Chronicle*, which had started as "the People's Newspaper" in 1945, had been bought out only two years later by Eugenio Lopez, a leading *cacique* of the Visayan "sugar bloc", and his politician brother, "Nanding". The newspaper was bought to support the bloc's case in Congress; the Lopez family at that time also owned the local Visayan *Iloilo Times*, for similar purposes (Pineda-Ofreneo, 1986: 33). By the 1960s the Lopez empire had expanded to include 36 major companies which embraced electric power, oil and oil products, heavy machinery and construction, shipping, cement, stocks and securities, real estate, banking, telecommunications, education, a residual interest in sugar and last, but by no means least, the mass media (*ibid.*: 123-4). As Pineda-Ofreneo has noted, from its relaunch under their auspices in 1947, "[...] the *Chronicle* operated in the red but it served as a *convenient instrument of political pressure*" (*ibid.* *Emphasis added*). In addition the Lopezes had acquired the nationwide ABS-CBN

network of 20 radio and five television stations. At the height of their economic and political power before Martial Law, the Lopez family had assets running into billions, allegedly owing the government \$3.5 million in unpaid taxes. ("Nanding" Lopez was, coincidentally, vice-president under Marcos until Martial Law.) Their lifestyle was a byword in profligacy; it was further claimed that their extensive foreign bank accounts depleted the Philippine foreign exchange reserves by millions of dollars (*ibid.*: 125).

The methods by which the Lopezes had acquired the ABS-CBN television network and Meralco are illuminating. They supported Magsaysay against Quirino in the 1953 elections by writing a series of vituperative editorials in the *Manila Chronicle*, one of which accused Quirino (with some justification) of being a "bad and sanctimonious president" (cited in *ibid.*). "Nanding" Lopez, the clan's political representative, was at this time running for senator under Magsaysay's adopted Nacionalista banner, so his fortunes were tied closely to Magsaysay's. When the latter became president, the Lopezes persuaded Magsaysay to foreclose the debts which Quirino's younger brother owed to the government, forcing him to relinquish to them the broadcasting company he had set up.

These details replicate, *mutatis mutandis*, the methods whereby both the old colonial oligarchs acquired land under the American administration and, later, the new Marcos cronies in turn acquired *their* economic holdings and "ill-gotten" wealth. That is, through legalistic manoeuvrings and semi-interventions of the state, wealth changed hands among those elites currently in political favour. Yet this was done without any essential creation of new economic wealth for reinvestment or accumulation at the macro level. Instead these transfers presented classic cases of "rent-seeking".

The *Manila Daily Bulletin* had the third largest circulation in 1966 of 55,000. It had been bought from its original American owner in 1957 by Hans Menzi, of whom more later. The other major backer of the *Bulletin* was, and remains to this day, the "ethnic Chinese" entrepreneur, Emilio Yap, whose commercial and banking interests also thrived under the Marcos regime.

The Sorianos owned the *Philippines Herald*, with a 1966 circulation of 49,000 (*ibid.*:125-6). They were also the owners of the RMN (Radio Mindanao Network) in Mindanao and eight other radio stations in major cities, along with the IBC (Inter-Island Broadcasting) TV network which broadcast on Channel 13 in Manila, Cebu and Davao. As a major oligarch family, the Sorianos vied with the Lopez clan for domination of significant operations within the secondary and tertiary sectors of the Philippine economy; each clan relied heavily on their media titles to defend their business interests against the other.

Table 2a. Mainstream Media Ownership I: the "Oligarch Media", 1965-72

<i>Owner/ Businesses</i>	<i>Newspapers *</i>	<i>Radio</i>	<i>Television</i>
ROCES family:			
race clubs; real estate; cinemas; lumber; banking; mining; construction; oil.	Manila Times (186,000) Daily Mirror (47,000) Daily Star [Pilipino]: Taliba (24,000) Pilipino Star	Associated Broadcasting (5 stns.)	 (1 stn.)
LOPEZ family:			
electric power; sugar plantations; oil; banking; construction; shipping; insurance; telecommunications; real estate.	Manila Chronicle (74,000)	ABS-CBN (20 stns.)	ABS-CBN Alto Broadcasting System - Chronicle Broadcasting Network (5 stns.)
SORIANO family:			
copper, iron mining; timber; oil; processed foods; fertilizers & feeds; light bulbs; containers; metal drums.	Philippines Herald (49,000)	RMN network Radio Mindanao Network + Inter-Island Broadcasting (TV) (8 stns.)	IBC network (3 stns.)
ELIZALDE family:			
iron, gold, copper mining; sugar plantations; rope, paints, wax; TV & radio manufacture.	Evening Post (39,000) The Sun.	MBC Metropolitan Broadcasting (8 stns.)	MBC (1 stn.)

* with Claimed Circulation Figures, where known: 1966

Source: Pineda-Ofreneo, 1986: 123-129.

By the mid '60s the Soriano industrial and commercial empire numbered 33 corporations across three continents. (The family were old Spanish *peninsulares*, who had supported Franco and the *falange* during the Spanish Civil War.) Their assets were valued at over \$100 million, and included such disparate interests as copper and iron mines; timber and oil; processed foods and soft drinks; fertilizer and chicken feed; light bulbs, plastic tubes, cardboard containers and metal drums. The family also had a number of lucrative partnerships with US corporations to produce "American goods" under licence (*ibid.*: 125-6).

The Elizaldes owned the leading evening paper, the *Evening News*, sixth Manila broadsheet with a total circulation in 1966 of 39,000. Other media interests included the MBC broadcasting networks with eight radio stations and one television station (Pineda- Ofreneo, 1986: 123-128, 130; Maslog, 1990: 29-30). By 1967 the Elizalde family collectively presided over an industrial empire of 20,000 employees, with interests in iron, gold and copper mining and steel; sugar, refining and liquor distilleries; rope, paints, wax and oils; television and radio set manufacture; insurance and shipping (*ibid.*: 127-8).

Several points about this catalogue are worthy of note (*see Table 2a above*). The most obvious is that three of the "big four" media-owning families earned their initial fortunes outside the media (the Roces clan were the exception). They were all "clan" *families* - as distinct from the *individuals* whom Marcos later promoted as "cronies". The majority had strong links - if not active participation as *caciques* - with local and national politics, and had been variously connected to successive administrations. They all had banking and financial interests at national and local level. Two families, the Lopezes and the Elizaldes, were closely involved in the sugar industry. All four families used their media outlets shamelessly to promote and protect their economic and political interests, and to attack those of their rivals.

In short, the mainstream Philippine media in the years before Martial Law were as integrated into the oligarchic economic and political system as the other institutions of the Philippine state. As such they were representative only of those narrow class interests of the *cacique-comprador* oligarchy, which had controlled the Philippine polity virtually from the late Spanish era. The "serious" broadsheet press catered to this elite and the upwardly-mobile middle-class fractions. Wealthy, English-speaking, privately-educated, and with privileged access to the narrow corridors of national and local government, its "top-end" A-B readers - who generally favoured the conservative *Bulletin* - would have had little interest in *reading* about any long-term negative effects of macro economic policies. They preferred to scan the social pages to learn of the social and political antics of their oligarch peers, or the economic advantage to be gained through temporary swings in the markets, engineered by favourable short-term legislation. Although the issue of corruption was a perennial favourite of politicians in opposition - voiced vociferously in the press and on the hustings, especially at election time - the political *outcomes* of such attacks were scant:

The press, owned by rival cacique families, was famously free. The reconsolidated, but decentralized, power of the oligarchy is nicely demonstrated by the fact that this press exposed every possible form of corruption and abuse of power (except for those of each paper's own proprietors), but in the words of historian and political scientist Onofre Corpuz: "Nobody in the Philippines has ever heard of a successful prosecution for graft."

Anderson, 1988: 16.

The more "professional middle-class" (B-C1-C2) readership of the "liberal" dailies like the *Times* and *Chronicle* were potentially more politicised, as witness their mobilisations during the first "Parliament of the Streets" in the two years prior to Martial Law. However they too were overwhelmingly urban - with 279,255 readers in 1967 from Greater Manila out of a total circulation of 416,785 for the six major English-language dailies - in a country still with a 75% rural population (cited in Pineda-Ofreneo, 1986: 129). This was hardly surprising given that a year's subscription to any of these publications would cost the "common Filipino" 20-22 days' wages (*ibid.*).

The situation in 1971, on the eve of Martial Law, was outlined by a journalist, Neal Cruz, who decried the "communication gap" between the 1.5 million elite readers - and the thousand-odd "English-only" journalists - of the English-language dailies, and the remaining 38.5 million vernacular speakers, who sought their "printed entertainment" elsewhere:

Of the 17 dailies in Manila, eight are in English, two in Pilipino, four in Chinese, two in Spanish [...].

But even if the present publications were made available to all, the trouble is that not many would understand them. A great bulk of the nation barely finished elementary school and therefore cannot understand English very well. [...] Yet it is this group which devours the illustrated comicbooks.

Cruz, N., 1971, "Why There is a Communication Gap",
cited in Pineda-Ofreneo, 1986: 133.

These findings put a more realistic gloss on the oft-cited claim that Filipinos have a "93.5% literacy rate" (*see section 4.2, above*). "Literacy", at this level, does not enable them to understand the deliberations and machinations of their political elites, conducted, and presented to them, in an alien, foreign language.

4.14. II. The Martial Law Period (1972-81) and pre-EDSA "Liberalisation" Period (1981-86).

The onset of Martial Law radically changed the patterns of Philippine press ownership. Given the readership profiles outlined above it is, however, unsurprising that these latter remained roughly the same throughout the Martial Law era. Only in the post-1983 phase of the "liberalisation" period (1981-86) did readership patterns alter significantly, as we shall see later.

After the initial emergency clampdown of September 1972 certain pro-government media outlets were allowed to reopen (*see Table 2b*). These included the government-owned *Voice of the Philippines* TV and radio stations, and the *Kanlaon Broadcasting System* (later renamed the *Radio Philippines Network*), owned by Marcos's old school friend Roberto Benedicto, who was to become one of the most notorious of the "Marcos cronies". He already reportedly owned the four-month-old *Daily Express*, which had been set up by the publisher Juan Perez Jr., a former editor of the (Philippine) *Daily Mirror* (Maslog, 1990: 34).

The *Daily Express* had been specifically launched as a pro-Marcos platform, when the administration-produced *Government Report* failed to attract readers beyond its free distribution to government offices. By undercutting its rivals, the *Express* had rapidly climbed to second place even before the imposition of Martial Law in September 1972 (Pineda-Ofreneo, 1986: 107). In the first few weeks of the clampdown with no other competition around, it achieved, as new market leader, a record circulation of 300,000⁵⁹ (Maslog, 1990: 35). Four sister publications, all with *Express* in the title, came out before the end of 1972, and claimed a combined circulation of 600,000 (*ibid.*).

The *Express's* competitors by then included a newly-launched *Times Journal*, with its own stable of weekly magazines, owned by the Romualdez clan. Benjamin "Kokoy" Romualdez, Imelda Marcos's brother, was to become politically prominent as Philippine ambassador first to Saudi Arabia, then China, and later to the United States. According to Bonner, "Kokoy" was "every bit as avaricious, unscrupulous, and ambitious" as his sister, sycophantically promoting the Marcos couple to all and sundry, and particularly members of the US elite (Bonner, 1987: 49). Like all other favoured cronies, Romualdez amassed a huge fortune during the Marcos era, including prestigious real estate in the USA. Another pro-Marcos media baron allowed to compete in the restricted conditions of Martial Law was Hans Menzi, Marcos's former military aide. Of Swiss parentage but with Philippine citizenship, Menzi had risen to the rank of Brigadier General in the Philippine military whilst serving against the Japanese.

Menzi already had a fortune in his own right: after the war he promoted the family companies he had inherited, which included the traditional *comprador*-oligarch interests of import-exports and shipping and insurance. By the end of the 1960s, Menzi owned companies with portfolios ranging from the manufacture of paper, office supplies and zips, to large plantations of tropical produce, farms and *haciendas*. He had by then acquired controlling interests in the *Manila Daily Bulletin* from its American founder, Carson Taylor, together with Liwayway Publishing Inc., publisher of the largest circulation magazines and "komiks" in vernacular languages, from the Roces clan (Pineda-Ofreneo, 1986: 70-1). His flagship daily was renamed the *Bulletin Today*, and became the leading "newspaper of record" under Martial Law, with circulation figures around 245,000.

The other significant "crony" media operators were the Tuveras, a husband and wife team close to the Marcoses. Juan Tuvera was Marcos's Executive Secretary; Kerima Polotan-Tuvera was Imelda Marcos's official biographer (Maslog, 1990: 42). They were allowed to publish the *Evening Post*, with a readership, initially, of 75,000.

4.15. Rent-seeking among Crony Press Owners

The circulation figures of the major crony press titles show significant variations between their initial launches at the onset of Martial Law and their performances in the run-up to EDSA after the Aquino assassination in 1983 (see *Table 2b*). There are two clear inferences. The first is that their continued survival relied not on market forces but on Marcos's personal protection.

The initial, relatively strong performance of the *Express*, for example, was due to its near-monopoly position in 1972. As the *Bulletin* regained its former strength as the establishment "newspaper of record", it displaced the *Express*; it remained the front-runner until the Aquino assassination, when the effect of a pro-Aquino boycott of crony newspapers decreased all their sales by 15-20% (Maslog, 1990: 46-47). This accounts largely for the disparity in figures between 1973 and 1986 (*the latter shown in bold in Table 2b*).

The second inference is that the place of their newspaper holdings in the general economic portfolios of Marcos cronies was less a "business weapon", more one amongst several profit-making opportunities afforded by the privileged treatment they received from Marcos. Crony proprietors were consequently as sanguine about circulation fluctuations as their oligarch predecessors, but for a different reason: they were indirectly cushioned from market forces by the state. The exception was Hans Menzi, who took his media empire seriously; he even risked occasional mild editorial criticism of the regime in his minority circulation titles (see *Chapter Six*).

The other cronies effectively perpetuated the economic culture of the oligarchs, with the difference that their rise to economic power was far more spectacular and abrupt than that of their predecessors. However, as can be seen in *Table 2b*, the profile of their economic holdings resembled the mix of tertiary sector service industries, mining enclaves, licenced franchises from foreign companies, state-protected and other intermediary enterprises, which had characterised the major holdings of the pre-Marcos oligarchy. Many of these were "rent-seeking", in the classic economic sense that they depended for their survival upon the selective protectionism (and endemic corruption) of the Philippine state. This was, indeed, little different from the economic pattern established by the traditional oligarchy, except in the enormous expansion of its scale. Because of their extreme economic dependency, the major change in tenor of the crony press from their predecessors was in their sycophancy towards the Marcos regime.

Table 2b. Mainstream Media Ownership II: the "Crony Media", 1973-86

<i>Owner/ Businesses</i>	<i>Newspapers *</i>	<i>Radio</i>	<i>Television</i>
ROBERTO BENEDICTO:			
<i>friend of Marcos;</i> sugar monopolies; hotels; shipping; banking; satellite & tele- communications.	Daily Express (300,000/ 105,000) Evening Express Express Sports Weekend Express Week Magazine	Radio Philippine Network (16 stns.) Banahaw Broadcasting Corp. (13 stns.) RMN-IBC (<i>ex Soriano family</i>) (8 stns.)	(6 stns.) (4 stns.) (8 stns.)
HANS MENZI:			
<i>friend of Marcos;</i> fruit plantations; paper production; paper mill; processed food; trading company; hotels; airlines.	Bulletin Today (245,000/ 215,000) Panorama; Tempo; WHO. [<i>Pilipino</i>]: Bannawag; Sine; Balita; Liwayay; Bisaya.		
BENJAMIN ROMUALDEZ:			
<i>brother of Imelda</i> <i>Marcos;</i> governor of Leyte; ambassador to US; assemblyman; <i>holdings in:</i> engineering; banking; car assembly; electric power - Meralco (<i>ex Lopez family</i>).	Times Journal (96,000/ 70,000); Manila Journal; People's Journal; People's Tonight; Taliba; Parade; Women's Journal; Observer.		
KERIMA POLOTAN-TUVERA:			
<i>wife of Marcos'</i> <i>Executive Sec.;</i> biographer of Imelda Marcos; Oriental Media Inc.	Metro Manila Times; Orient News; World News; Focus Magazine; Evening Post (75,000/ 43,000).		
<i>Philippine Roman</i> <i>Catholic Church</i>		Catholic Welfare Organisation (11 stns.)	
<i>Miscellaneous</i>		Mountain Province Broadcasting (20 stns.) Northern Broadcasting Corp. (20 stns.)	

* with Claimed Circulation Figures, where known: 1973/ 1986 (in bold).

Sources: Maslog, 1990: 39-43; Pineda-Ofreneo, 1986: 179-81

As noted earlier, the profile of mainstream broadsheet readers changed noticeably after the Aquino assassination in 1983: as the middle classes became mobilised out of the political apathy they had succumbed to during the Martial Law era they sought those segments of the press which afforded them a more accurate view of the state of the nation than the uncritical crony papers. They turned increasingly to the so-called "mosquito" alternative and opposition presses. Their drift from the crony mainstream, reinforced by an active boycott of the latter, created favourable economic conditions for successful new entrants: some of these were already vying with the crony press in circulation figures by the time of EDSA.

4.16. III. The post-EDSA "Transitional" Period (1986-93).

In the aftermath of EDSA, crony newspapers which had been unreservedly pro-Marcos atrophied, whereas new and resuscitated titles multiplied rapidly. In the struggle to re-establish a "free press" among the debris of sequestered crony media networks, the main beneficiaries seemed to be some of the more powerful pre-Martial Law media owners, together with an emergent breed of "Aquino cronies" and new business magnates. Some of these last included so-called "ethnic Chinese" businessmen. They had done well during the Marcos years, chiefly through accommodating the dictator's financial deals in return for Marcos's liberalisation of citizenship laws in 1975 (*FEER*, "The Philippine Paradox", 12 July 1990: 34).

After EDSA there had been a proliferation of new newspapers: by 1990 there were 27 newspapers published in Metro Manila. These consisted of nine national English-language broadsheets (compared with only three under Martial Law), four English-language tabloids, an afternoon daily, two business papers, six Pilipino-language tabloids and five Chinese-language papers (Sussman, 1990: 34; Nieva, 1991: 121). Nieva speaks tellingly of a "glut" of newspapers (Nieva, 1988: 19).

Marcos papers either folded (*Daily Express*); changed their names (the *Bulletin Today* reverted to its old name, the *Manila Bulletin* and the *Times Journal* became, simply, *The Journal*); or withered from lack of advertising support (the *Evening Post* and the *Express's* short-lived successor, *The Philippine Tribune*, both failed).

Two pre-1972 "tri-media" (that is, television-radio-newspaper combines) were revived, although such cross-media holdings were supposedly against the new Constitution. The favoured corporations were the Lopez and Roces empires. Eugenio Lopez had re-acquired - along with the return of the Manila electric monopoly, Meralco - the family media empire consisting of the television and radio network ABS-CBN and the newspaper, the *Manila Chronicle*. The Roces family again brought out the *Manila Times* but it remained a shadow of its former self (Nieva, 1991: 123). However the liberal current affairs weekly,

Philippines Free Press, made a partial come-back under the Locsin family; under Raul Locsin they also published the liberal *Business World*. The Elizaldes too came back into media with the *Manila Standard* and their radio station DZRH.

All these names - Lopez, Roces, Locsin and Elizalde - had opposed Marcos in pre-Martial Law days, had consequently had their media enterprises shut down, and had supported Aquino's EDSA challenge in varying degrees. The doughty Joaquin "Chino" Roces, for example, had played a leading role in pro-Aquino street demonstrations and in establishing the election watchdog NAMFREL before the Snap Election. Teodoro Locsin Sr. had been detained by Marcos at the beginning of Martial Law for his outspoken comments against the dictator. Teodoro "Teddyboy" Locsin Jr., the proprietor's son, became Aquino's information minister and presidential speechwriter, and gained some notoriety for his brashness and quick temper.

The circulation figures of a handful of the more successful former opposition and "alternative" presses soared around the time of the "Snap Election" and EDSA, simply because they were the most "credible" sources of hard information about what was actually taking place. During the EDSA revolt itself, *Malaya* continued to hold the field as the left-leaning daily which challenged the renamed *Manila Bulletin* with a readership of over 250,000. A new title, the *Philippine Daily Inquirer (PDI)* was set up by the owner of *Mr. & Ms.*, Eggy Apostel (Maslog, 1990: 46).

Malaya and the *PDI* briefly became the leading two dailies in 1986. In the heady atmosphere of "revolt" the fortunes of the old-style *Bulletin* seemed temporarily to wane as it lost credibility and readers. The situation which had prevailed immediately after the declaration of Martial Law, when only Marcos-approved titles were allowed to be published, was to a certain extent reversed. It was now the turn of the *Daily Express*, owned by Marcos arch-crony, Roberto Benedicto, to be sequestered and shut down by the newly-appointed Presidential Commission on Good Government (PCGG).

But the *Bulletin* fought back. As the political climate became more conservative after 1988, with attempted coups, the government's "total war" policy and renewed economic crisis looming, the *Bulletin* again became top English-language newspaper closely tailed, towards the end of the Aquino era, by the *PDI*. Emilio Yap, a Chinese-Filipino magnate with major banking and shipping interests, became the outright owner of the *Manila Bulletin* publishing group in 1987, after "mysteriously acquiring" shares previously owned by Marcos and his surrogates (anonymous sources: O/Is). The group also includes a subsidiary which publishes two successful Pilipino tabloids, *Tempo* and *Balita*.

Table 2c. Mainstream Media Ownership III: "Mixed Business", 1986-93

<i>Owner/ Businesses</i>	<i>Newspapers *</i>	<i>Radio</i>	<i>Television</i>
A. <u>"TRADITIONAL" TITLES</u> (see also Table 2a).			
1.	Manila Bulletin (239,000)		
(i)	bought out (from Menzi estate) in 1987 by:		
EMILIO YAP shipping; agri-business.	Liwayway Publishing [Pilipino] (including Balita)		
<hr/>			
2.	Manila Times (144,000)		
(i)	bought back in 1987 by:		
ROCES family real estate; cinemas; lumber; banking; mining; construction; oil.	Daily Mirror (40,000) Daily Star [Pilipino]; Pilipino Star	Associated Broadcasting Corp. (5 stns.)	(1 stn.)
(ii) sold to John Gokongwei in 1990 (see Section C below)			
<hr/>			
3.	Manila Chronicle (83,000)		
(i)	bought back in 1987 by		
LOPEZ family oil; banking; construction; shipping; insurance; telecommunications; electric power, etc.		ABS-CBN Alto Broadcasting System - Chronicle Broadcasting Network	ABS-CBN (5 stns.)
(ii) sold to Antonio Cojuangco, <u>et al.</u> in 1990 (see Section C below)			
<hr/>			
4.	Other Titles owned by "oligarch" media families		
SORIANO family	(formerly owned Philippine Herald)		
San Miguel Brewery; Coca-Cola bottling; mining; timber; oil; processed foods.	replaced in 1988 by: Manila Standard (124,000)	RMN network IBC network (Radio Mindanao Network + Inter-Island Broadcasting)	
		(8 stns.)	(3 stns.)
ELIZALDE family:			
iron, gold, copper mining; sugar plantations; rope, paints, wax; TV & radio manufacture.	Evening Post (39,000) The Sun.	MBC Metropolitan Broadcasting	MBC (1 stn.)
		(8 stns.)	

Table 2c (cont). Mainstream Media Ownership III: "Mixed Business", 1986-93

<i>Owner/ Businesses</i>	<i>Newspapers *</i>	<i>Radio</i>	<i>Television</i>
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B. FORMER "MOSQUITO" PRESSES (see also Table 4)

MAIRIXI PRIETO; EDGARDO ESPIRITU	Philippine Daily Inquirer (260,000)		
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hotels; fast food
outlets; real estate;
paper; printing press;
banking.

LUCIO TAN; EDUARDO COJUANGCO; AMADO MACASAET	Malaya (55,000)		
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airlines; tobacco;
brewery; agribusiness;
hotels; real estate;
sugar; banking.

C. "NEW BUSINESS" PRESSES (founded post-EDSA)

WILLIAM GATCHALIAN	Philippine Star (296,000)		
airline; plastics; banking;	Star Group (including Fukien Times)		

JOHN GOKONGWEI	Manila Times (144,000)		
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hotels; banking;
real estate;
building and land
development;
agri-business;
financial investments;
oil and minerals.

ANTONIO COJUANGCO ROBERTO COYUITO	Manila Chronicle (83,000)		
--	--------------------------------------	--	--

telecommunications;
oil and minerals;
insurance; banking.

RAMOS family	Daily Globe (closed 1993) (50,000)		
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National Bookstore
(chain booksellers);
real estate; oil.

Table 2c (cont). Mainstream Media Ownership III: "Mixed Business", 1986-93

<i>Owner/ Businesses</i>	<i>Newspapers *</i>	<i>Radio</i>	<i>Television</i>
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D. FORMER "MARCOS CRONY" PRESSES

(government-sequestered; formerly owned by Benjamin Romualdez)

Journal Group/ Development Bank of the Philippines	People's Journal (300,000) People's Tonight Taliba (220,000)		
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* with Claimed Circulation Figures, where known: 1993⁶⁰*Sources:* Pineda-Ofreneo, 1986: 123-129; IBON Facts and Figures, vol.18/8. 30 April 1992; ibid., vol.19/11. 15 June 1996.

The group's dailies, of which the *Bulletin* is politically by far the most influential, have a combined circulation of over 500,000. In spite of the stigma of being a pro-Marcos newspaper under the late Hans Menzi, the *Bulletin* again became the conservative "newspaper of record" under Yap, who built it into "an important political and business power lever" (*FEER*, "Watchdogs or Vultures?", 28 February 1991, p.24).

Yap represents the economic ascendancy after EDSA of the *parvenu* "ethnic Chinese" business entrepreneurs who benefitted from collaboration with the Marcos regime. The connection between this "new money" and the Philippine media illustrates the increased use after EDSA of the press as a business weapon once again.

Other Chinese-Filipino and ethnic Chinese magnates have attempted to replicate Yap's media success. John Gokongwei owns hotels, shopping malls, a food conglomerate and, jointly with the Lopez family, one of the country's largest banks. In 1988 he took over the *Manila Times* from the old newspaper-owning Roces family (*ibid.*: 24; Sussman, 1990: 41). The newspaper continues, however, to lose money, whilst still supporting Gokongwei's business interests (anonymous source: O/I).

The fate of a new title also merits attention. The Ramos family owns the country's largest bookstore chain, the National Bookstore, the Shangri-La luxury hotel complex, and mining and oil-drilling operations. Taking their cue from Yap's success with the *Bulletin*, in 1988 they set up as the proprietors and publishers of the *Daily Globe*, with the Locsins, publishers of the *Philippines Free Press*.

With these titles behind them they felt emboldened to mount a raid on the Atlas Consolidated and Mining Corporation of the old oligarch family, the Sorianos. The latter, it will be remembered, had been

powerful former owners of the *Philippines Herald* and the giant San Miguel Corporation in the pre-Marital Law era, but had emerged from the Marcos years much weakened.

After EDSA the Sorianos had acquired the *Manila Standard*, which they used to fight the Lopezes over the lucrative management contract to operate the Manila International container port. The Lopezes, with their resuscitated tri-media empire of radio and ABS-CBN television networks and the *Manila Chronicle*, fought back (*FEER*, "March of pluralism", 5 September 1991, p.16). All three newspapers - the *Times*, *Standard* and *Chronicle* - have middling to poor circulation figures, and have lost their owners money, but have been maintained as business weapons.

In 1992-3 because of the continuing economic squeeze on a glutted market the Ramoses were unable to meet the demands of staff for better pay and conditions and eventually decided to close the title. However it is well to remember that the initial impetus for the *Globe* probably came as much from the promotion of business interests (the Soriano raid) as from any high-minded attempt to expand the liberal press.

Malaya has suffered an interesting fate. Burgos acquired political ambitions and stood as a senatorial candidate in the May 1987 elections, on the left-wing ANP slate against an old "trapo" family. He therefore decided, given the uncertain economic and political situation after EDSA, to sell out his majority holdings in *Malaya* to his business editor, Amado Makasaet. In spite of a swing to the right under its new owner, the paper failed to challenge its major conservative rival, the *Bulletin*, which was by now securely reestablished. *Malaya* has posted consistent losses of circulation through the '90s, with a readership of approximately 55,000 in 1993 - a far cry from its post-EDSA heyday of 300,000 (*Philippine Journalism Review*, vol.2/1, June 1991. p.31).

The *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, the other major "new" post-EDSA challenger to the *Bulletin*'s dominant position has now settled back into third place, behind the *Philippine Star*, owned by "plastics king", William Gatchalian, another *parvenu* "ethnic Chinese" beneficiary of the Marcos years (*see Chapter Seven*).

The latest figures (1996) show that the market is still remarkably volatile, susceptible to large fluctuations in circulation and even absolute numbers of publications. A comparison between 1993 and 1995 illustrates this continued jostling for position in a crowded market; it is also remarkable for the recent growth of tabloids, both in absolute numbers and in circulation figures relative to the formerly predominant broadsheets (*see Table 2d*). Yet, even here, the English language still predominates: the top sellers, *People's Journal* and *People's Tonight*, both government-sequestered and -run, are both published in English; their Pilipino counterparts, *Taliba* and *Balita*, published by the *Bulletin*'s owner,

Emilio Yap, still fail to outstrip their broadsheet rivals. Only the top five titles in the table remain profitable.

Table 2d. Top Circulation Titles, 1993-95 (in thousands)

Broadsheets	1993	1995	Tabloids	1993	1995
3. Manila Bulletin	239	340	1. People's Journal	300	400
4. Philippine Star	296	285	2. People's Tonight	326	350
5. PDI (Inquirer)	240	260	8. Taliba	220	176
6. Manila Times	144	210	8. Balita	151	176
7. Manila Chronicle	83	190			
<i>Total Nos. of Titles published in Manila:</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>12</i>		<i>15</i>	<i>25</i>

Source: Philippine Media Factbook, 1993 and 1995

Recent mass media surveys by the National Statistics Office have shown that newspaper readership is declining overall among Filipinos, from 33% in 1989 to 29.8% in 1994 (cited in IBON Facts and Figures, "Press Release", vol.19/11, 15 June 1996). Newspapers are still read predominantly by urban households - 25.0%, compared with only 0.5% among their rural counterparts (*ibid.*). Tabloids remain the preserve of the lower classes, whilst the upper and middle classes consume the English-language broadsheets. Metro Manila remains the centre of newspaper culture with over a quarter of all published titles: 144 out of 458 in 1993; 171 out of 524 in 1995 (Philippine Media Factbook, 1993 and 1995).

Interestingly, a recent readership survey of 296 respondents revealed that whereas the liberal *PDI* was preferred by readers aged 45 to 64 (17%), the 34-44 age group took the conservative *Bulletin* as first choice; in both cases their readership remained predominantly upper and middle class (cited in IBON Facts and Figures, "Press Release", vol.19/11, 15 June 1996). This may reveal a swing to the right among the younger generation, whilst the "Martial Law" generation remain loyal to the liberal politics of EDSA.

4.17. Summary: Philippine Press from pre-Martial Law to post-EDSA

The so-called "freest press in Asia" has been capable of pointing out deficiencies of the political system, though these have generally been expressed in personalistic terms. Individual titles have attacked particular presidential and congressional incumbents or candidates, for opportunistic political or economic gain. Yet these criticisms have come in the main from the media instruments of rival elite and bourgeois

fractions; they have rarely recognised the very serious defects of the elite's macro agendas, or suggested alternatives. The media have almost never assumed a prescriptive role, preferring the trivia of social gossip and elite rivalries to any agendas representing the needs of the increasingly marginalised rural and urban poor. It remains to be asked whether they should, or could, have realistically done so, in the contexts of the Philippine polity or of the wider issue of the media's role in society. These questions will be a matter for debate in subsequent chapters.

It is clear, however, that the "freedom" of the pre-Martial Law press should not be mistaken for the idea of "independence" from government and other state institutions - much less from the economic and political interests of the oligarchy. Anderson cites the example of the small circulation weekly periodical, the "muckraking *Philippine Free Press*", as a "celebrated symbol of [press] freedom" but goes on to remind us that the Locsin family, its owners, "was violently opposed to any unionization of its staff, and used brazenly brutal methods to thwart it" (Anderson, 1988: 16, fn.50). "Freedom" has rarely proved an effective counterweight to self-interest.

This is the general context in which the changes in ownership of the Philippine media should be analysed. By the late 1960s the oligarchs had consolidated their position as major owners of the mainstream Philippine press and the media in general, combined in cross-media empires. These empires were becoming increasingly concentrated. The pre-Martial Law media therefore resembled many other Philippine institutions: beneath a veneer of "democracy", elites and their *cacique* political representatives were free to set and manipulate economic and political agendas largely unconstrained by any real public accountability. Under the Marcos presidency, however, these oligarchs were to find their control of the Philippine economy severely challenged.

The major difference between the Marcos cronies and the traditional oligarchs was in the speed with which they made their acquisitions, and in the scale of their apparently limitless propensities for plunder. Their voraciousness exceeded by far those they had supplanted. This was because they were abetted by a completely unaccountable, militarised regime, and unfettered by effective opposition from other elite fractions, at a time when multinational investment and loans were being encouraged as never before.

Their media ownership entirely supplanted traditional oligarch titles immediately after Martial Law was declared. The editorial policies of the crony media mirrored their dependent and uncritical relationship with the Marcos regime. The "watchdog" role of the traditional oligarch media, used to criticise the malfeasance of elite rivals and state administrators, including the executive, disappeared entirely; a bland "developmental journalism", praising the government's supposed "development projects" took its place.

After EDSA there was a partial restoration of the *ancien regime* under Cory Aquino, with the return of many media enterprises to their former oligarch owners. The major change in ownership patterns was

the entry of two new bourgeois fractions into the mainstream broadsheet press. The first challenge to the oligarchs' traditional dominance of the media came from former "mosquitos" such as *Malaya* and the new "stablemate" of *Mr. & Ms.*, the *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, both of which proved, at least initially, more than a match for the established titles. However by the end of the Aquino era in 1993, they too had become simple media enterprises, run by business consortia in the traditional way.

The second challenge came from *parvenu* entrants of newly-rich "ethnic Chinese" entrepreneurs, several of whom had benefitted considerably from collaboration with the Marcos regime. Like the traditional oligarchs before them, they continued to perceive press ownership as a "business weapon". It is interesting that they have concentrated their media enterprises thus far on the press (*see Table 2c*); this probably indicates that the broadcast media are perceived as too expensive and too high-risk, with their high entry and capital start-up costs, to offer effective "business protection" for other "rent-seeking" activities.

The only substantive alternative to Herman and Chomsky's "propaganda" model in the Philippine media to date, therefore, might seem to have been that of the two "mosquitoes" turned "mainstream". Yet both of these initially successful titles had, by the '90s, settled into the Western liberal tradition of "balanced", as distinct from "advocacy", journalism. The oppositional Philippine press of the pre-EDSA "liberalisation" period effectively ceased to exist once the initial goal of ousting Marcos had been achieved. Only the non-mainstream "group" or "micro" presses, run by NGOs and "people's organisations", maintained a radical edge to their critiques of the Philippine state and its ruling elites, as we shall discover in subsequent chapters.

Endnotes to Chapter Four

1. The exact number of islands is 7107, but only around one seventh are inhabited. Sea comprises three times the archipelago's total land area, 96% of which is taken up by eleven large islands.
2. The precise ethnic makeup of some of these territories is a continuing bone of contention, particularly in Malaysia where Malay bumiputra ("sons of the soil") are defined as "the original inhabitants", and consequently entitled to greater political rights than later arrivals such as, for example, the Chinese.
3. Luzon and Mindanao account for 65% of the land area and 60% of the country's population.
4. Metro Manila comprises the four contiguous conurbations of Manila, Quezon City, Caloocan City and Pasay City.
5. Of the 30 or more volcanoes in the Philippines, 10 are classed as active.
6. See, for example, the weekly comparative figures issued by *FEER*.
7. ASEAN, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, presently consists of Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines and Indonesia.
8. Figures quoted by Howard Handy, IMF representative to the Philippines. Cited in *MC*, 19.5.94.

9. Professor Leonor Briones, president of the reformist pressure group, Freedom from Debt Coalition (FDC), has repeatedly criticised IMF "Structural Adjustment Programmes" (SAPs) for the Philippines. FDC claims that these IMF plans are "anti-growth" and will inhibit Philippine ambitions to join the East Asian NICs by the year 2000 (see, for example, "RP-IMF Draft Economic Programme", *MC*, 31 March 1994).
10. The Spanish colonists' first landfall in the Philippines, by their Portuguese surrogate, Magellan, had culminated in 1521 in the death of the "circumnavigator" at the hands of a rebellious Filipino chief.
11. This was said of the Spanish friars' nineteenth-century counterparts in Samoa, but applies equally to both groups.
12. Mestizo came in the Philippines to mean those of mixed Filipino and either Spanish or Chinese blood. Unlike in Latin America the term did not necessarily carry inferior connotations, despite the mestizo class's varying fortunes relative to the peninsulares (metropolitan Spanish) and criollos (colony-born Spanish) - who were always few in number, even by colonial standards.
13. Chiefly with the US and Britain, who forced Spain's hand. Manila was fully opened to international trade in 1843 (Anderson, 1988: 7).
14. In the 1840s this "thriving textile industry" had 80,000 looms in the regional capital of Iloilo City. The industry was decimated by cheap European imports. Nicholas Loney, appointed British Vice-Consul, was an agent for several Manchester textile firms (Jagan and Cunnington, 1987: 6-8).
15. "Dependent" here relates to the heavy reliance on an agricultural monoculture export, sugar - and on the external capital needed to finance the sugar centrals (mills) which produced it. Panay had been virtually self-supporting in the 1840s; by 1888 90% of its import bill was devoted to textiles and rice, previously both home-produced; 98% of export earnings came from sugar (Jagan and Cunnington, 1987: 10).
16. In 1987 sugar's contribution to Philippine exports was 5.59% of all agricultural products (compared with coconut products at 40.11%), down from 21.88% in 1965. Sugar earnings were halved during this period (from US\$ 147m. to US\$ 78m.), whereas manufactures increased nearly one hundredfold (from US\$ 39m. to US\$ 3,558m.). (National Census and Statistics Office, 1988, cited in Putzel, 1992: 21).
17. Negros Occidental (regional capital, Bacolod) is associated with Panay (regional capital, Iloilo) as the sugar hacienda belt of the Western Visayas. Negros Oriental has closer ties with neighbouring Cebu to the east. Where "Negros" alone is referred to in this thesis, especially in connection with the "sugar bloc" and haciendas, it will generally be taken to signify Negros Occidental.
18. It is the norm on many haciendas in the Visayas, as indeed throughout the Philippines, for landowners to maintain private armies; to finance CAFGUs and vigilante groups; to condone, and often to encourage and enlist, police and military violence against their workers, particularly those who organise.
19. It is important, even at this early stage in the debate on classes and class fractions in the Philippines, to distinguish between fractions of the peasantry (such as small farmers, who may even sub-let land to other tenants) and rural labour (such as the sacadas or sugar workers). The latter are virtually landless; their primary source of livelihood is work on haciendas or at sugar mills, as wage labour.
20. His most famous books are Noli Me Tangere (Touch Me Not) and El Filibusterismo (The Subversive).

21. "Nationalist" in Philippine politics has come over the years to take on a particular local meaning, which will be discussed in detail later. At this stage it corresponds to "anti-colonial".
22. Caudillo is here taken to signify "military leader" on the nineteenth century Latin American model of "regional war-lord". Anderson uses the designation for Aguinaldo almost interchangeably with cacique (local political boss). See Anderson, 1988: 9-10.
23. The Aguinaldos went on, under American rule, to become substantial landowners in Cavite. A successor, still bearing the family name, has been in bitter and violent dispute over the land rights of tenant farmers in Cavite during the Aquino and Ramos periods.
24. Luzviminda Francisco calculates that up to one seventh of the total estimated Philippine population died as a consequence of the Filipino-American War (*ibid.*: 8-19; 31), which she calls "[t]he First Vietnam" (*ibid.*: 9). Certainly the adjective "genocidal" does not appear inappropriate. Well-documented atrocities include those of General "Howlin' Jake" Smith who instructed his soldiers to reduce the island of Samar to a "howling wilderness". Concentration camps in Batangas and Central Luzon, set up to break the Filipino guerrillas' resolve, rapidly became extermination camps (*ibid.*: 18), where "by American admission over 100,000 died" (Fast, 1973: 75). In one village, Bonner reports (1987: 29), every male over ten years old was ordered shot.
25. Literacy rose from 20% in 1903 to 49% by 1939: 27% of the population then spoke English, a higher proportion than Tagalog-speakers (cited in Anderson, 1988: 19, fn.60).
26. Although "nationalism" was a populist position - virtually a sine qua non for any Philippine party then seeking a popular base - the Nationalistas remained very ambivalent about any nationalist sentiment that included empowerment of the lower classes.
27. In 1903 over 80% of land was worked directly by its owners; 35 years later, by the end of the American Colonial period this figure had fallen to 49% (cited in Fast, 1973: 76).
28. Copra is the dried "meat" of the coconut, the oil extract of which is used in many products from soap to vegetable oils. The Philippines is currently the world's biggest exporter of copra and coconut products; they accounted for 40.11% in value of its agricultural exports in 1987 (National Census and Statistics Office, 1988, cited in Putzel, 1992).
29. Key "free trade" acts included the Payne-Aldrich Tariff Act of 1909; the Bell Trade Act of 1946; and the Laurel-Langley Agreement of 1955.
30. All these agreements were broadly conceived, at the behest of US financial and export interests, to facilitate an "open" economy of lowered tariffs for US imports and investments into the Philippines - a notably one-way traffic.
31. Many Caribbean islands replicated, in their economic dependency Britain, the Philippine-US relationship (Coote, 1987: 27).
32. Not only was the Philippine government a virtual one-party system (Abueva, 1988: 42), but "only about 14 percent of the potential electorate was permitted to vote" in a "highly restricted, property-based franchise" (Anderson, 1988: 11, fn.26).
33. The Sakdalistas were a peasant organisation founded in the early 1930s, mixing primitive socialism with millennialism and sporadic mobilisations (Fast, 1973: 79). By the late '30s, however, the Philippine Communist Party (Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas, PKP) and the Socialist Party reflected the growing political organisation, militancy and ideological sophistication of the Central Luzon peasantry (*ibid.*; Goodno, 1991; Schirmer, 1987).

34. There is still much debate about the Philippine class structure, much of which rests on the varying characterisations of the economic mode of production. Thus "working/lower classes" are variously described as "the common tao" or bayan, signifying "people" or "majority" (Lynch, 1959; Wurfel, 1988: 61-62).
35. He had been a cabinet minister in the Japanese puppet government. It was said that his pre-war friendship with the US military "liberator" of the Philippines, General Douglas MacArthur, secured his exoneration (Fast, 1973: 81).
36. Clark was the largest US air base installation in Asia, and its fourth largest on foreign soil. Subic Bay, with its three wharves and three floating docks, was home to the US Seventh Fleet. The two towns of Olongapo and Angeles City, which grew up outside the bases to "service" American military personnel, became a by-word for sleaze.
37. In the five presidential races between 1949 and 1965, two of the successful candidates, Magsaysay and Marcos, switched parties in order to stand against their former mentors, the presidential incumbents Quirino and Macapagal (Schirmer and Shalom, 1987: 114).
38. Anderson never clearly defines *caciquism*. It is generally taken to mean the dominance of local politics by one, or a few, powerful political clans. The Philippine "political clan" has been usefully defined as:
- a family and its extended relations or network, whose members have controlled for over a long period (twenty or more years) the formal elective posts in a locality or political subdivision.
- [Philippine] Institute for Popular Democracy, 1992: 8-9.
39. This term is used by analogy with "ersatz capitalism" (Yoshihara, 1988). It implies an electoral system with the formalistic, outward trappings of democracy, but with little of the substance. The concept is elaborated later in the text.
40. By the 1950s an estimated two-thirds of the rural population were landless, most of them in the most exploitative relationship possible: that of sharecropping, whereby the greater proportion of their crops were turned over to the landlords (Fast, 1973: 76).
41. This period covers the regimes of Magsaysay (1953-57); Garcia (1957-61); Macapagal (1961-65); and Marcos's first incumbency (1965-69), up to Martial Law in 1972.
42. These factors are part of what Yoshihara (1988) has characterised as "ersatz capitalism".
43. Roxas and Magsaysay both died in office. Quirino as vice president succeeded Roxas in 1948, then went on to win the 1949 elections. Garcia as former vice-president won the 1957 elections.
44. In 1970 the Manila authorities stated that private armies were owned by around 80 political bosses in rural areas: half by Senators and Congressmen, the other half by Provincial Governors and Mayors. Over 500 "private security agencies" also hired mercenaries for *ad hoc* political purposes like elections (cited in Fast, 1973: 79).
45. In an alternative version, the Magsaysay family owned "various farms" and a merchandise shop, and relatives owned a bus line. Here, as a pre-war branch manager, Ramon Magsaysay organised strike-breaking, and took strike leaders to court - hardly the actions of a "man of the masses" (Schirmer and Shalom, 1987: 113).
46. At this time the CIA in the Philippines was headed by the specially-appointed Colonel Edward Lansdale, a former Madison Avenue advertising man, who particularly appreciated the value of effective propaganda.

47. Fast states that the cost of American participation in the suppression of the Huks was over \$1 billion. Counter-insurgency techniques acquired in the Philippines proved useful later in Vietnam (Fast, 1973: 85).
48. The other common accusation made against Third World oligarchic states, that of excessive military spending, cannot really be levelled at the pre-Marcos Philippine regimes. It grew to massive proportions only in the Martial Law era.
49. These, it must be recognised, included landed oligarchies who had been weakened by the war, or were effectively absent from policy-making in the immediate post-war political scene; and the military and economic support from the US for "front-line states" in the Korean, and then the Vietnam, Wars. See Cumings, 1987.
50. See Table 1 above.
51. The Second Vatican Council of 1962-65, or "Vatican II", formulated the church's new engagement, not only with the spiritual needs of the poor, but also with the material struggle against Third World poverty and oppression.
52. Like the current president, Fidel V. Ramos, who also served in the Philippine contingent participating in the Vietnam War.
53. The US provided the Philippines between 1946 and 1983 with a total of \$2.4 billion in economic assistance, and \$1.2 billion in military assistance (Hawes, 1987: 147).
54. Pilipino was the name for the (somewhat synthetic) national language based on Tagalog, the language of Central Luzon and hence Manila. In the 1987 Constitution the name "Pilipino" was changed to "Filipino" (Maslog, 1990: 26). Philippine people frequently refer to themselves as Filipinos, and I have preserved this usage where appropriate.
55. This draconian legislation includes, in Malaysia, the notorious Internal Security Act (ISA) of 1960, the Official Secrets Act (amended 1984), the Printing Presses and Publications Act of 1984 and a requirement to renew the annual permit to publish newspapers and periodicals. Similar legislation obtains in Singapore (as, indeed, it did in the Philippines under Marcos). Such state control gives rise to a "cautious, timid, and frequently servile [media] role in reporting and interpreting the news" (Means, 1991: 138).
56. Of the 87 languages and dialects spoken in the Philippines only five are spoken by the majority of Filipinos (Maslog, 1990: 26). The Roces newspaper empire covered all five.
57. The fifth addition to the "big four" was Hans Menzi. His media involvement will be examined separately, as a "Marcos crony".
58. "Komiks" in the vernacular are the biggest circulation periodicals in the Philippines.
59. John Lent (1982: 273) claims that *Express* sales had risen to 520,000 by mid-October, three weeks after Martial Law was declared. This figure seems inordinately high: the Maslog (1990: 35) figure seems more plausible.
60. "By several unofficial estimates, the top three dailies sell about 60% of their claimed circulations but in the case of others, actual circulation ranges between 10% and 30% of their claims" (IBON Facts and Figures, "The Business of Newspapers", vol.15/8, 30 April 1992). 60.

5. CHAPTER FIVE. "DEMOCRACY" CURTAILED, 1965-81

5.1. Freedom Endangered: The Gathering Storm, 1965-1972

This chapter analyses some of the major political processes underpinning events in the Philippines from Marcos's accession as president in 1965, through the declaration of Martial Law in September 1972 to its lifting in January 1981. The chapter considers what political and economic forces led to Marcos's authoritarian regime, and what basic similarities to, and differences from, previous Philippine regimes it displayed.

After an initially impressive and vigorous opening to his first term, Marcos and his regime grew beset by familiar Philippine economic and political ills. Foremost among these was a burgeoning balance-of-payments crisis arising from import dependency and deficit spending (Doronila, 1992: 153 ff.). The economic downturn rapidly descended into crisis after the 1969 elections, when Marcos's raiding of the public purse for patronage and electioneering costs plunged the economy into a massive deficit. The elections themselves were popularly perceived as the most fraudulent in Philippine history¹, but they achieved Marcos's ambition. He was the first Philippine president to be elected for a second term.

Marcos was by comparison with the traditional oligarchs a *parvenu*. He came from the province of Ilocos Norte in North Luzon, which because of its relative geographical isolation had developed its own brand of independent-minded *caciques*. Marcos won his first spurs at the side of his father, himself an erstwhile lawyer and politician, in extremely dubious circumstances². He went on to serve three terms as a congressman and one as senator before standing for president in 1965. Many observers thought his career was enhanced by his marriage to former beauty queen, Imelda Romualdez, from another *cacique* family, based in the East Visayan island of Leyte; the family wealth was derived from commodity exports of copra.

Marcos's major political rival to emerge in the early 1970s, Benigno "Ninoy" Aquino, was an urbane journalist, who had started his career as a reporter in the Korean War and the Malayan Emergency whilst still in his late teens (Bonner, 1986: 101-2). Aquino hailed from a venerable *cacique* line, the Aquinos of Tarlac in Central Luzon. Like Marcos he consolidated his political - and economic - position by a good marriage: to Corazon Cojuangco, from one of the wealthiest *hacenderos* in the Philippines. Their Hacienda Luisita was a byword for opulent wealth - and impoverished tenants. "Ninoy" Aquino made a name for himself under Magsaysay as a staunch pro-American and anti-communist and himself claimed credit for facilitating the surrender of the communist Huk leader, Luis Taruc³. In print Aquino hewed to the prevalent "domino theory" about the perceived danger of the spread of communism in Southeast

Asia, particularly in relation to the cases of Korea and Vietnam. He, like other *caciques*, kept his own private army or "goons", in accordance with the "tradition" of rampant political violence in his home province of Tarlac (Bonner, 1987:106).

As an ambitious and "cunning" politician (*ibid.*), Aquino became the Philippines' youngest vice-governor, governor and senator in quick succession. In short, he was but one outstanding example of many young members of the *cacique* class with political ambitions, growing to political maturity within the ideology and values of economic and political dependency prevalent in the "neo-colonial" Philippines. In that sense he was little different from his slightly older rival, Ferdinand Marcos, whose political career he shadowed. The major difference perhaps was that after Marcos's defection-of-convenience to the Nationalistas in 1965⁴, Aquino was on the "other side of the fence", protesting allegiance to the rival Liberal party, which by the 1970s he headed.

At one level therefore the struggle between Marcos and Aquino might be seen as yet another contest between *cacique* rivals for the spoils of presidential office - a cynical, but familiar, Philippine scenario. Yet the political turmoil of the early 1970s had deeper structural causes than a mere political play for power. It was in part a response to the consequences of the parlous state of the economy, which had simply become too dependent and debt-prone to generate any significant productive wealth. The particular crisis of 1970-71 had, it is true, been precipitated by Marcos's profligate raiding of the governmental treasury coffers to finance his ostentatiously fraudulent 1969 election bid. But the crisis had been in the making ever since Macapagal had introduced economic liberalisation measures and eased currency transfer restrictions in 1962. The resultant flight of foreign capital, domestic bankruptcies, and consequent profiteering and penetration by both subsidiaries of foreign corporations and domestic businesses had dealt a severe blow to hopes of economic and industrial regeneration.

Indeed, far from stimulating foreign investors into returning capital into the Philippine economy, the financial relaxations had encouraged foreign entrepreneurs to avail themselves of the scarce domestic capital in Filipino banks. Jonathan Fast records that the ratio of capital outflows to inflows after 1962 was estimated at 5 to 2 (Fast, 1973: 89). The net effect on the domestic Philippine economy was disastrous. According to an International Labor Office report of 1974 (known as the Ranis Report), total under- and un-employment was estimated at 25%.

The maldistribution of national income had worsened significantly over the two decades of independence - the share of income for the bottom 60% of rural families actually declined from 32.8% to only 27.2% of total national income between 1956 and 1971, whilst the wages of urban labourers also registered an 8% fall in real terms (quoted in Schirmer, 1987: 132-3). An earlier report had estimated that 50% of all wealth was owned by 5% of the population (*ibid.*: 158). Expressed otherwise, the income ratios of

the richest to poorest 20% of the population had widened from 12:1 to 16:1 between 1956 and 1965 (cited in Doronila, 1992: 159).

The government remained uninclined to tackle these social and economic injustices through redistributive measures. This was clear from the fact that taxation remained highly regressive: the bulk of it fell on the poor through various complex import duties and sales taxes on necessities; the paltry levels of income tax imposed on higher incomes were in the main expertly evaded.

During Marcos's first term (1965-69) internal debt rose by 85% to P[Pesos].5.8 billion (approximately \$1 billion or 18% of GNP) and external debt by 69% (based on figures cited in Doronila, 1992: 154). These continuing endemic trade imbalances had left the Philippine economy hostage to the dictates of IMF structural adjustment strategies. Successive regimes had been forced to impose fierce devaluations (in 1962 and 1969)⁵. These measures had also severely hit the poor and low-paid. Inflation, which had remained at 4.5% through the 1960s, jumped to 14% in 1970 (and an average of 16.9% by 1974). It was fuelled by the rising price of essential imported foodstuffs, including rice.

In spite of the temporary successes of the much-vaunted "Green Revolution" in the late 1960s, by 1971 disastrous epidemics of plant diseases, to which the new so-called "miracle" grains were non-resistant, had severely hit domestic rice production. The resultant spectre of famine was exacerbated by the wave of land dispossessions resulting from the collapse of many small farmers in the face of the spiralling costs of even attempting such input-intensive programmes (Fast, 1973: 91). As Doronila mildly expresses it, "it is not difficult to see why the sharp rise of inflation during the late 1960s shocked the people and intensified social unrest" (Doronila, 1992: 156).

The growing intellectual mistrust of Marcos which had been simmering, particularly on the campus of the University of the Philippines, finally broke out in the student unrest of January 1970, popularly known as the "First Quarter Storm". Students confronted Marcos; in heavy-handed fashion, the police subsequently confronted students on the Mendiola Bridge⁶, killing six. This further radicalised students into joining forces with rebellious Manila workers and left-wing trade union strike and protest actions. These not infrequently ended in running battles and riots.

The social inequalities, rampant corruption, and ineffective political and economic management of the 1960s had also fuelled a radical political movement which finally emerged at the end of 1968 as the revamped Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), led by a former University lecturer, Jose Maria Sison. This was followed shortly thereafter, in March 1969, by the formation of its armed wing, the National People's Army (NPA), led by Bernabe Buscayno, otherwise known as "Kumander Dante". The NPA had an initial force of "fewer than 50 armed men" (Doronila, 1992: 161).

The conjuncture which gave rise to the imposition of Martial Law, on 22 September 1972⁷, was a combination of several economic and political factors. Perhaps primary among them was Marcos's own naked ambition to remain in office beyond the maximum period of two terms allotted to him in the 1935 Constitution. In 1970 a Constitutional Convention (or Concon as it was familiarly known) was elected, which sat for the following 18 months to review the 1935 Constitution and, amidst growing controversy, propose a new substitute constitution.

Marcos needed, personally, a pretext for circumventing the two-term restriction on the presidency. Contention arose because, in spite of Marcos's alleged attempt to bribe members willing to acquiesce in his demands⁸, there remained in Concon some stubborn opposition to Marcos's transparent desire to create a long-lived political dynasty (involving, if necessary, his garish wife, Imelda). Certain Concon members were prepared at least to attempt to ban Marcos from a third term of office, and as a general principle to dilute the over-concentrated powers of the presidency.

There was also a genuine reforming faction among the delegates, albeit in a minority, who not only wished to reorganise the Philippine electoral system, but also to engage in a genuine debate about the wider Philippine polity. They were willing to make their conflict with Marcos public, in front of the students eagerly camped outside the Concon assembly hall. They added their voices to the mass mobilisations in the so-called "Parliament of the Streets". This movement, partly in alliance with Aquino's Liberals and other "bourgeois nationalists", was becoming increasingly vocal in its opposition to the regime.

One opposition vehicle was the Movement for the Advancement of Nationalism (MAN), formed in 1967. MAN included "nationalist industrialisation" - that is, ISI - entrepreneurs and other disgruntled members of the business sectors; some scientists and technologists; media practitioners, writers and artists; political and civic leaders; educators and other professionals; students, youth, women, and urban and rural labour. With twelve sectors in all, it was an attempted alliance between the "radicalised masses" and fractions of the professional middle classes.

These combined temporarily with elite and bourgeois opponents of Export-Oriented Industrialisation (EOI), which was the new government policy advocated by Marcos's "technocrats"⁹. MAN aimed to mobilise support to challenge Marcos's economic agenda. This consisted, basically, of ever closer ties with international finance and investment capital, increased deficit spending for "top-down development" - and spiralling indebtedness. These issues had been symbolised for many critics by the 1955 Laurel-Langley agreement, which had renewed "parity" arrangements during the Magsaysay period and was due for renegotiation in 1974; MAN was determined to oppose any continuation of the deleterious "parity" agreement.

In the face of this growing opposition, now coming both from bourgeois fractions and the radicalising left - and increasing mass support in the form of strikes and protest demonstrations - Marcos badly needed to form new political alliances. During his first term he had cannily built up the strength of his support in the military by promoting an Ilocano clique whose personal loyalty he could rely on for his "palace guard"¹⁰.

The defence budget was also increased substantially from 12.1% to 13.4% of total government expenditures between 1965 and 1972. Marcos embarked on a new alliance with technocrats, bowing to IMF pressures to "liberalise" the economy (chiefly for the benefit of US multinationals) and to adopt a "low wage" strategy. The latter policy required of necessity a show of state coercion, to "stabilise" a restive labour force.

In what might be interpreted as a "counter attack" against international pressures towards "liberalisation", the Philippine Supreme Court handed down in August 1972 a ruling, known as the Quasha decision, which would effectively have banned US citizens from Philippine land-holdings after 1974 (Schirmer, 1987: 163; 225). This fuelled US investors' fears for the continued safety of their other Philippine holdings under "parity rights". The ruling was doubtless a significant factor in persuading the international community to condone, if not actively support, Marcos's imposition of Martial Law a month later.

To all this political turmoil was added a veritable crime wave stimulated by easy access to guns, a general outbreak of warlordism in certain provinces, and gang warfare in Manila and other cities. One US journalist reported that "[p]olitical murders are almost daily occurrences. Politicians and businessmen hire professional gunmen for protection." (Quoted in Schirmer, 1987: 159). It is not difficult therefore to understand that a US administration, nervous about the security of its strategic military bases and the future of US investments in the country, might begin to view with concern the signs of breakdown of state control. An apparently burgeoning NPA communist insurgency, amidst growing radicalism and unrest among the general populace, might even result in the ultimate American nightmare - in the light of its experience in Vietnam - another "communist takeover" in Southeast Asia.

Given Marcos's flare for rhetoric, especially to foreign sympathisers, it was easy for him to build these "threats" way beyond their actual numerical significance, in order to justify his assumption of emergency powers. It should not be forgotten that, when Martial Law was declared, the NPA numbered a mere 1,028 guerrillas according to Marcos's own claim (Timberman, 1991: 67) - hardly an overwhelming threat to the state. But there is no doubt that the opposition to Marcos had been real enough, and was growing.

5.2. The Media's Opposition to Marcos, 1970-72

As the economic crisis of the late 1960s and early '70s sharpened, "Ninoy" Aquino became one of the most vociferous of Marcos's critics. He was expected in political circles to contest the presidency in the coming 1973 elections - successfully¹¹. He was backed by the powerful Lopez clan, who were by the 1970s "the nation's wealthiest family" (Wurfel, 1988: 18) - with their extensive media machine. Fernando "Nanding" Lopez had been Marcos's successful vice-presidential running mate in both 1965 and 1969. The clan had, however, embarked on a damaging feud with the president in the early 1970s as Marcos's anti-oligarchy campaign got under way. Thereafter their newspaper, the *Manila Chronicle*, joined the anti-Marcos fray. The paper's front-page editorial on the 1971 local elections exhorted voters to reject the Marcos "administration and person" in "The Protest Vote" (cited in *ibid.*).

The country's leading daily, the *Manila Times*, the major newspaper vehicle of the Roces' media combine, had already dropped all pretence of "balance" after its publisher, Joaquin "Chino" Roces, had unsuccessfully backed Sergio Osmena Jr. for president in the 1969 elections. "Its anti-Marcos line", wrote a critic, was thenceforward

[...] synonymous to its pro-Aquino line, and while the rumor that Aquino is a stockholder may be just that, it is still generally conceded among Times employees that the Aquino-Times liaison is more than substantiated by the Times' full coverage of even the most insignificant Aquino speech in the remotest of barrios [...].

cited in Pineda-Ofreneo, 1986: 104.

Marcos fought back. In November 1971 he and Aquino were the protagonists in an unseemly media row. In October Aquino had challenged Marcos at a Davao Liberal Party rally to "tell the Filipino people where he gets his enormous wealth [already by 1971!] in the midst of the misery of the Filipino people" - and, as described above, was duly reported in the *Manila Times*. A libel suit was filed by Marcos for 5 million pesos. Aquino threatened to file a counter suit over mudslinging by Marcos of Aquino's supposed Huk and communist links. This altercation had all the classic ingredients of Philippine political warfare waged through the media. The accusations of graft and corruption were nearly always well-founded; but allegations were generally made by fellow *caciques* tarred with exactly the same brush. Philippine anti-communism in the '70s was as rabid as its American counterpart: the taunt of "communist" was levelled at almost any opponent with the vaguest of liberal pretensions. As we have seen Aquino was in fact as anti-communist and pro-American as most of his fellow *caciques*, including Marcos.

The case also illustrates the Philippine proclivity for litigation in general, and in the special case of the media, for libel suits. According to Pineda-Ofreneo, Marcos had already used this tactic on several

previous occasions to "clog" the media and "inject [...] fear into the hearts of many a [newspaper] desk man who would think twice before letting a severely critical piece see print" (Pineda-Ofreneo, 1986: 270, fn.44). During Martial Law, both Marcos and the military used libel actions to silence their media critics, and Cory Aquino, sadly, was later to adopt the same tactics towards the end of her presidential term. In fact, members of the Philippine elites, at all levels of society down to the remotest provincial official, have always displayed a readiness to resort to litigation. This, again, they have inherited through the American colonial system. The threat of libel action has been one of the abiding constraints on the "free" Philippine media throughout its history.

However, Ninoy Aquino was not so easily gagged. He was also alert to Marcos's political machinations. As chief political challenger over the constitutionality of Marcos's continued stay in the presidency, he warned publicly of Marcos's ambitions. In early September 1972, amidst a plethora of provocatively staged bombings in Manila¹², Aquino revealed details of a government plan, code-named Oplan [Operation Plan] Sagittarius to implement Martial Law. His revelations probably precipitated Marcos's fateful decision (Bonner, 1987: 97-8).

5.3. Freedom Suppressed: Martial Law, 1972-81

With hindsight it is possible to argue that a declaration of emergency rule was, after the "First Quarter Storm" confrontations in early 1970, only a question of timing. First was the prevarication Marcos himself had probably organised, the bombing on 21 August 1971 of the Liberals' election rally at the Plaza Miranda, in which nine people were killed and 100 wounded. Although the full facts have still not been incontrovertibly established, the bombing was probably committed by Marcos's own provocateurs¹³, as a first assassination attempt on Ninoy Aquino, who was fortunately delayed and arrived late.

Marcos used the event as a pretext to revoke *habeus corpus* for six months, claiming that the attack had been instigated by far-left groups. According to Alex Brillantes (1987), after the Plaza Miranda bombing it only remained for Marcos to secure military support and US acquiescence before he invoked his emergency powers fully. The supposed "last straw" was the "ambush" of Marcos's defence minister, Juan Ponce Enrile, the night before Marcos announced Martial Law. Enrile himself admitted in 1986¹⁴ that the incident had been contrived as a final justification for Martial Law, which he said had been planned long in advance¹⁵ (Doronila, 1992: 166; Brillantes, 1987: 115-8; Bonner, 1987: 100 fn.).

In Proclamation 1081, which formally announced the imposition of Martial Law, Marcos specifically denounced:

[...] publications, broadcasts and dissemination of deliberately slanted and overly exaggerated news stories and news commentaries as well as false, vile, foul, and scurrilous statements, utterances, writings and pictures through the press-radio-television media and [...] some newspapers published [...] by these lawless elements.

cited in Maslog, 1990: 33.

Marcos had presented himself to the international community as "the centre" against the "lawless elements" of both left and right. In his Proclamation 1081 the President also claimed that the media had been infiltrated by sympathisers of the communist insurgency, who had consequently blackened the name of the government and the military.

Significantly Marcos's first act after the imposition of Martial Law, in issuing his "Letter of Instruction No.1", was to gag the media by directing his Press Secretary and the Secretary of National Defense to "take over and control all media of communications" (cited in *ibid.*). In most cases this meant closing down print and broadcast media outlets completely. Other immediate measures included suspension of the constitution and consequently Congress; all mass organisations were banned, and radical activists and his major opponents were detained.

Prime among these was, of course, Ninoy Aquino, who remained in jail, on vague charges of communist conspiracy, for the longest period of any of Marcos's protagonists. Another significant arrest was that of Jose Diokno, the noted human rights lawyer. Both these captives were, in spite of Marcos's allegations to the contrary, more "liberal" than "radical". In the face of the Philippines' precarious domestic and international economic situation, it is doubtful whether Ninoy Aquino, given the opportunity to be president, would have proved any more "liberal" in the long run than any of his predecessors, including Marcos¹⁶.

Leading media men who were arrested included two of Marcos's most vociferous opponents: Eugenio Lopez Jr., brother of Vice-President Fernando and publisher of the *Manila Chronicle*; and Joaquin "Chino" Roces of the *Manila Times*. Editors like Amando Doronila (of the *Chronicle*) and Luis Mauricio (*Graphic*); and lead columnists like Maximo Soliven of the *Manila Times*, Luis Beltran of the *Manila Evening News*, and Renato Constantino of the *Graphic*, who had all been critical of the president, were also detained.

The obvious institutional casualties of Martial Law were the media empires of the "big four". Lopez and Roces were Marcos's arch enemies. Eugenio Lopez had accused him in the *Manila Chronicle* of being a "scoundrel" consumed by "insufferable arrogance" and dared him to "try putting an end to freedom of speech in his country" (cited in Maslog, 1990: 31). Marcos, who never forgot a slight, was now in a position to rise to the challenge. He incarcerated Eugenio Lopez and peremptorily confiscated the Lopez media empire without compensation, along with their majority holdings in Meralco (Anderson,

1988: 22; Wurfel, 1988: 123). Chino Roces and his publications suffered a similar fate. The Elizalde and Soriano interests were bought out.

Other anti-Marcos periodicals which not unsurprisingly suffered were Antonio Araneta's *Graphic*, the Locsins' *Philippines Free Press*, and the vaguely left-of-centre *Asia Philippines Leader*¹⁷, owned by the Jacintos. All three had criticised the Marcos administration vociferously. The *Philippines Free Press*, owned and edited by Teodoro Locsin Sr., had described Marcos as "the most hated or despised man in the country" (quoted in Maslog, 1990: 32); Locsin was incarcerated and his publications were closed down permanently.

Asia Philippines Leader had specifically been launched to help the Jacinto family, another wealthy oligarch clan. Their aim was to fight a propaganda war against the Marcos government's foreclosure of its massive Iligan Integrated Steel Mills (IISM), which Marcos wanted to bring under state control (Pineda-Ofreneo, 1986: 105; 120; 135). With the *Leader* gagged, Marcos went ahead unreported, handing IISM over to the military for administration.

5.4. Profile of the Crony Media: Favours and Constraints

The crony print and broadcast media were established immediately after Martial Law was declared in 1972; they were the only presses allowed to appear legally at the outset of the emergency period, and as a consequence came to dominate the Manila print media forthwith (*see Chapter Four*). One of Marcos's first acts after the declaration of Martial Law had been to shut down all newspapers and magazines; foremost among those suppressed were, of course, the entire publications of the four "multi-media" oligarch families, the Roces, Lopez, Elizalde and Soriano clans, which had all, by 1972 become unrestrainedly critical of Marcos policies aimed at drastically reducing their economic and political powers.

Thus, certainly at the beginning of Martial Law, Marcos would brook no criticism from any domestic media. He had already allowed the *Daily Express* group to be set up early in 1972, just before he declared Martial Law, with his old and trusted school friend, Roberto Benedicto, as owner-publisher. This was in order to counter, he claimed, the vociferous anti-Marcos tenor of the mainstream oligarch press at that time. In the initial phase of the emergency, therefore, the *Express* was uniquely positioned to become the circulation leader of English-language broadsheets.

Likewise, Hans Menzi was allowed to continue publishing the now-renamed [Manila] *Bulletin Today*. As a personal friend of Marcos, Menzi always remained circumspect in what criticisms of the dictator's

regime he let his editors publish. After partial liberalisation in 1981, however, some oblique critiques of the regime's excesses were allowed in his minority-circulation periodicals, as we shall see later.

The favoured few publications, which Marcos personally permitted at the outset of Martial Law in 1972, conversely had to operate under very strict conditions. These were set out in the plethora of presidential decrees designed to constrain the media. A line of regulatory bodies followed each other in fairly rapid succession within the first two years of Martial Law¹⁸ to control what was written, by whom, and on what subjects. These bodies followed the pattern of censorship controls employed by authoritarian regimes throughout Southeast Asia and, indeed, the world over. A major weapon in controlling media output was the issuance of licensing certificates which were to be authorised by Marcos personally.

Besides employing the commonly-encountered pretext of "national security" as due cause for restraining publication, the Media Advisory Council (MAC), the longest lived of the media regulatory bodies, had wider powers to insist that the media "downplay or ignore stories which [MAC] feels are not conducive to the development of an atmosphere of tranquillity" (quoted in Pineda-Ofreneo, 1986: 138). Behind the quaint language, however, the rules of censorship were interpreted in fairly draconian fashion.

Reports suppressed under this edict ranged from stories on the armed Muslim rebellion in Mindanao, which was reaching its peak by 1973, to "alarmist" reports of a cholera outbreak (*ibid.*). Even publications identified closely with Marcos were not excluded from MAC's disciplinary powers: the business editor of the *Daily Express* was sacked for alluding to a (US) Associated Press report that dared to suggest that the armed forces were divided over support for Martial Law. A columnist of the same paper was reprimanded for writing about the negative effects of curfew on the nocturnal entertainment industry (*ibid.*).

However after eighteen months it was felt both that MAC's chairman, Primitivo Mojares, was abusing his position¹⁹ and also that there was now sufficient political space for a little easing of the severest censorship regulations. MAC was replaced in November 1974 by the Philippine Council for Print Media (PCPM) on which sat major representatives of the crony press. The print media had thus arrived at "self-regulation". The PCPM nonetheless retained powers to withdraw recognition, cancel registration or suspend any reprobate media organs and practitioners, including advertisers. The guidelines it issued exhorted publishers to adopt an attitude of "moderation and sobriety, rather than sensationalism".

Teodoro Valencia was a columnist on the *Daily Express* and leading apologist for Marcos's "New Society"²⁰ which had been introduced after Martial Law, and which Valencia described, disarmingly, as "the new consensus" (cited in Wurfel, 1988: 118). He nevertheless found himself critical of the PCPM. He wrote that it was used by the "lords of print media" to create an "insipid press but a very prosperous one". This the PCPM achieved, he claimed, by excluding "small fry" periodicals from using

the dubious circulation-building practices which the large controlling operators themselves employed. These included "all shades of pornography, [...] gossip about movie stars and starlets and worse [...]" (cited in Pineda-Ofreneo, 1986: 141).

It was in this atmosphere of intimidation that the new "development communication model" for the media was publicised, with Marcos himself as one of its more enthusiastic advocates. This model, according to its academic and governmental advocates, would harness the press (and the media generally) as an agent of development rather than in the traditional "watchdog" role. According to Shafer, however, this new emphasis on development priorities was simply used by the Philippine government "as a tool of repression and as a means to maintain itself in power" (Shafer, 1991: 6).

John Lent recounts how, in 1973, Marcos himself appeared daily on television with a prayer to "bless the nation", whilst television government promotions portrayed farmers reading about land reform (which was, for most of them, as near as they ever came to the real thing). Radio and television commercials stressed how safe the streets had become since the advent of the "New Society" (cited in Lent, 1978: 181).

In his book on the Asian press, however, Lent describes the downside of this bright face of the corporate state: corruption among journalists was rife by 1977, as bribe-taking became the order of the day; and a foreign newspaperman described the Philippine press as "so scandalously servile [that] the only source of reliable domestic news is the classified ads." (cited in Lent, 1982: 277). In similar fashion the Marcos government also tried to control the "image" of the Philippines abroad, by restricting information available to the international press.

More serious from a human rights standpoint was the harassment of journalists who remained critical of Marcos. These were liable to arrest, detention and prolonged incarceration, even torture and death, on "suspicion of subversion", for any anti-government articles they published. Effective criticism was silenced: for those scratching a living on a day-to-day basis, as do most hack journalists in the Third World, "terror works"²¹. Conversely, for those journalists willing to promote uncritically the agendas of Marcos and his officials, including the military, there were suitable financial inducements and payments-in-kind to swell their wage packets.

In sum, the media that emerged under Martial Law could be characterised as even more concentrated in ownership terms than their pre-1972 counterparts, with consequently fatter profits for the lucky few, at least initially. In return, the crony media were required to be stultifyingly servile in their reports and editorials about Marcos, his family and cronies, and the military - a task they fulfilled conscientiously. Set against these political requirements of the regime and the economic rewards available for media

collaboration, however, was the professionally demeaning loss of the media's credibility among a public starved of real news about the state of the nation.

5.5. Marcos's "New Society": Reconstruction or Repression?

The international business community, as noted previously, was happy to condone Marcos's "New Society" if it created the conditions for a new era of "stability". Martial Law was endorsed both by the local American Chamber of Commerce and by Washington. A staff report prepared for the US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations of February 1973, five months after Marcos's coup, states unequivocally that:

We found few, if any, Americans who took the position that the demise of individual rights and democratic institutions would adversely affect US interests. [...] Even in the Philippines, our own colonial step-child and "showcase of democracy" in Asia, the United States appears to have adopted a new pragmatism [...]. Thus, US officials appear prepared to accept that the strengthening of presidential authority will [...] enable President Marcos to introduce needed stability; [...] and that] military bases and a familiar government in the Philippines are more important than the preservation of democratic institutions which were imperfect at best.

quoted in Schirmer, 1987: 168.

Samuel Huntington could not have expressed more eloquently the arguments for supporting "stability" and a "strong regime" in the face of "decay" (compare, for example, Huntington, 1965). On the other hand, the US staff report commented, with considerable prescience: "It would be ironic indeed [...if] martial law produced conditions which transformed the imagined [communist] threat into a reality [...]" (Schirmer, 1987: 168).

After an initial surge in economic activity, from the late 1970s onwards the Philippine economy rapidly deteriorated, as the old cycle of deficit spending, indebtedness and economic strictures repeated itself. Worsening foreign debt was compounded by vast "leakages" of capital to Marcos's personal cronies, a slightly more sophisticated version, and on a far grander scale, of the plundering of the state that had been endemic in the Philippines since Quezon. The difference now was that, as "supreme *cacique*", Marcos controlled all patronage, and consequently most of the gains of rent-seeking activities.

Grandiose "development projects" funded or underwritten by the World Bank and foreign finance houses displaced any attempts at mere sustainable subsistence. Thus the Magsana 99 project - hailed in 1973 as a major "crash programme" to make the Philippines self-sufficient in rice through unsecured credits to poor farmers - had faltered by the mid-70s because of its inadequate top-down political management. Besides being rife with the usual political corruption, administrators simply had not taken account of the realities of the small Philippine farmer. These included his sheer inability to invest in long-term projects

or, unsurprisingly, to repay loans when he was on or below the breadline (Wurfel, 1988: 171-3). In spite of the much-vaunted land reform programme to issue Certificates of Land Transfer to tenants -who would be able to buy their land through government loans on easy terms - by 1977, five years after Marcos's activating Presidential Decree 27, a mere 1,667 farmers in the entire Philippines had completed their payments and become full owners (Wurfel, 1988: 168). In any case the true thrust of government agricultural policy in the "New Society" was towards the encouragement of agribusiness and corporate farming, which was, of course, completely at odds with Marcos's populist rhetoric of "land to the tiller".

Industrial and urban development projects were if anything even more misguided. Mismanaged and prone to massive corruption because of their vast scale, lack of adequate planning, surveillance and accountability, many of them were simply expensive white elephants. Foremost among these must be numbered the grandiose building projects of Imelda Marcos, who as Governor of Manila erected gargantuan architectural follies, whilst leaving the problems of housing the swelling shanty and squatter communities unaddressed.

Perhaps the most notorious of Marcos's grand development projects was the Bataan Nuclear Power station. Negotiated by Herminio Disini, one of Marcos's most venal cronies, it eventually cost \$1.2 billion. The estimated cost spiralled four times beyond the initial tender made by Westinghouse; at that price it amounted to almost one fifth of the country's foreign debt. Nevertheless the US Export-Import Bank in Washington agreed to provide the necessary loans and guarantees, after being personally approved by the bank's director, William Casey, later head of Reagan's CIA and "until the bitter end one of Marcos's staunchest defenders" (Bonner, 1987: 265). This was in spite of the fact that the reactor was built on a geological earthquake fault, and has consequently never been operational since its construction. Marcos ignored all advice, overruling both a much cheaper tender by General Electric and a more advantageous loan from a rival bank syndicate, simply to guarantee for himself a kick-back of nearly \$80 million from Westinghouse. Disini's construction company was awarded the plant construction contract without even bidding for it - the illicit profits from the inflated prices he was able to charge were "funnelled" via a circuitous route into Disini's European bank accounts (Bonner, 1987: 265-7).

The project was virtually a paradigm for all that was wrong with the Marcos style of top-down "development", with its hasty - or non-existent - planning, its massive corruption, and the irresponsibility, greed and graft of the international players. The Philippine nation has been the loser for this irresponsibility, as it continues to struggle to pay off the foreign debts accrued by venal and incompetent leaders, in collusion with international finance and investment capital.

An authoritarian regime like Marcos's "New Society", increasingly devoted to plundering the nation's assets by all available means, would obviously engender deep dissatisfactions among many sectors of society. Like other authoritarian regimes around the world, Marcos's policy was to exclude the popular

sectors, both rural and urban, and especially the political classes, amongst whom now numbered his most bitter opponents.

Previously the Philippine *cacique* oligarchy had agreed on a comfortable system of rotation in office, which in elite terms was politically stable and economically enriching, whilst always ignoring the "social volcano"²² of poverty and social injustice simmering among the majority of the population. By contrast, Marcos's main business support domestically came only from his small band of cronies. It was clear that the discontents his misrule was now exacerbating could only be held in check effectively over the long term by state coercion. Thus the Philippine military found itself with a growing role to play.

5.6. *The Role of the Military under Martial Law*

Although not strictly a "military regime" in the same sense as those of Chile's Pinochet, the "Greek colonels" or the "Brazilian generals" of the late 1960s and '70s, Marcos's "New Society" increasingly drew the military both into administrative life and into acting as a surrogate judiciary, at least in the early years of Martial Law. From being underfunded and somewhat peripheralised prior to 1965, the military found themselves in the 1970s centre stage in Philippine political life. When Marcos declared Martial Law, the US had immediately doubled its military aid to the Philippines. By 1982 this had risen to \$140 million, with an extra \$100 million as "rent" for the US bases (Davis, 1987: 53).

As we have seen, Marcos began his plans to overthrow the power of the old oligarchs by first securing the military. After 1972 he retained their allegiance by a rapid expansion of the armed forces. By manipulating budgets he was able to increase the size and funding of the AFP (Armed Forces of the Philippines) enormously after Martial Law. The AFP's strength doubled from 53,000 to 113,000 between 1971 and 1976²³. The defence budget grew nearly tenfold over the same period (CIIR, 1992: 11).

Marcos also politicised military leaders by involving them in the civil administration, not only through the building of infrastructure such as roads and bridges - this he had initiated before Martial Law. They also became controllers of national telecommunications, the post and ports, and the National Computer Center. Military "advisers" were posted in most government offices, and for politically sensitive cases special military tribunals were set up (Wurfel, 1988: 143).

In a completely new departure, the military also "took over the management, control and operation" of several public utilities such as the Manila Electric Company (Meralco) seized from the Lopezes, the Philippine Long Distance Telephone (PLDT) companies, public waterworks, railways and the Iligan Integrated Steel Mills (IISM), seized from the Jacinto clan (*ibid.*).

The military really came into their own, however, in the counter-offensives against the communist insurgency and the rebels in Mindanao fighting for a Muslem homeland. Yet the AFP was, in fact, often still ill-equipped and poorly-trained to engage in guerrilla warfare in the mountainous interior terrain of many Philippine islands. A para-military force of armed civilians, the Civilian Home Defense Force (CHDF) was consequently strengthened in 1974. Most of these CHDFs were organized in Mindanao, where the hardest fighting raged, but they too remained poorly trained and disciplined, and soon became feared and loathed for their human rights abuses, often made against fellow civilians in personal revenge killings (*ibid.*: 141). An attempt at reforming the old, corrupt Philippine Constabulary (PC) by creating the Integrated National Police (INP) and combining them with the military, failed essentially because, under pressure from local government officials - often known as *lidars* - these latter were allowed to retain much of their (corrupting) influence (*ibid.*: 142).

By the early 1980s the military started resorting to the tactic of "hamletting", that is, the deliberate destruction and relocation of civilian villages in "communist-infested" areas, to deny the insurgents any mass civilian support. This technique had already been "perfected" by the British during the Malayan Emergency and by the Americans in the Vietnam War. It could best be described as "state terrorism". According to Wright, "the injustices and disruption which were endemic upon [hamletting's] implementation often had the effect of increasing anti-government sentiments among the people" (Wright, 1988: 15).

Many of the army's raw recruit soldiery and the CHDFs preferred to target innocent rural villagers in remote areas where there were few witnesses, rather than to risk their lives against an elusive, ever-growing enemy. (By the early 1980s, the NPA numbered almost 20,000 guerrillas). The incidence of military human rights abuses escalated alarmingly - by the AFP, by the unruly CHDFs, and by the still corrupt INP, headed by Marcos henchman, Fidel Ramos (the current Philippine president). Even the normally conservative church became involved. Increasingly parish priests, inspired by liberation theology to help the poor in their communities, first grew politically active, then radicalised, and finally found themselves becoming targets of the military's murderous campaigns.

Since the military was now packed in its upper echelons with reliable Ilocanos, Marcos thought he could entrust it to handle most aspects of the counter-insurgency, without incurring that worst fear of dictators - that the military could be turned against him. He clearly felt secure in his position politically and militarily when, in January 1981, he announced the lifting of Martial Law.

5.7. Summary: the "New Society" - Origins and Outcomes

Several important trends characterised the Martial Law years. Firstly, after an initial economic surge engendered by export-oriented growth, the Philippine economy rapidly returned to debt-racked crisis, as Marcos and his cronies pillaged the loans which irresponsible foreign banks, with more petro-dollars than economic sense, extended in the name of spurious "development". Secondly, the AFP's role changed drastically as it struggled to contain a growing communist insurgency. Human rights abuses proliferated. The higher army echelons grew as corrupt as the oligarchs before them, whilst soldiers in the field experienced deteriorating supplies, equipment, living conditions and morale. Thirdly, Marcos centralised patronage in the office of the president. Job, office, and "pork barrel" patronage, which had formerly been available through local *caciques* and *liders*, was now administered solely from the top - either by Marcos in person, by his cronies, or by trusted members of the military. These three factors polarised Philippine society as never before.

Nonetheless it is also important to note the continuities with previous regimes. Marcos in effect carried the undemocratic system of *caciquismo* to its logical conclusion. Inheriting a political and economic system which was clearly unsustainable, he set out to wrest power from the traditional oligarchs by allying himself with new domestic and international business interests and "modernising" technocrats. These international actors included a number of US MNCs. They initially saw their interests coinciding with Marcos's agendas, at least as expressed in public. They were perfectly happy to endorse his promises of a "stable business environment", and his anti-communist and "New Society" development rhetoric.

As a neo-colony the Philippines had since independence found itself producing low-value export commodities for the international markets, whilst importing high-value industrial goods and fuels (Doronila, 1992: 131). This had resulted in an ever widening trade gap and a consequent descent into increasing indebtedness and economic dependency, occasioned by unfavourable terms of trade on the one hand, and by the deep economic penetration of foreign finance and investment capital and a supine domestic bourgeoisie on the other. Because of the domestic supremacy of the landed oligarchs, little of this internationally-incurred debt capital benefitted the country as a whole; instead it encouraged rent-taking by elite and state actors in a cycle of usury and non-productive syphoning of wealth. From this standpoint the major difference between Marcos's "kleptocracy" and the previous plunder of the oligarch regimes was its scale.

As regards the media, the differences before and after the imposition of Martial Law were certainly noticeable. The weight of legal, political, economic, and coercive constraints on media practitioners rendered the surviving crony press more venal, more servile, and far less interesting than its pre-1972

counterparts. "Developmental journalism" became a synonym for uncritical, pro-government anodynes. Without the draconian controls of Martial Law, the media might well have reported the human rights abuses and massive corruption of the Marcos regime earlier and more consistently. Yet given that, according to Cruz, "nobody in the Philippines [had] ever heard of a successful prosecution for graft", would that have changed very much in terms of consistent political outcomes? The total neglect of majority needs, and the lack of any organic growth of institutional accountability within the Philippine political system, meant that successive elite regimes had remained unresponsive to the criticisms of the former "freest press in Asia" even prior to Marcos. Under Martial Law, the government became if anything even less responsive to what little criticism was aired publically²⁴.

Yet by the early 1980s there were stirrings of dissent. Things were about to change again, and rapidly. Marcos lifted Martial Law in 1981, and a new era for the media, if not for the Filipino poor and dispossessed, was about to begin.

Endnotes to Chapter Five

1. The election costs have been estimated variously at \$50 - \$100 million in public and private funds (cited in Bonner, 1987: 76; 140-1). Additionally "over 200 people died in the pre-election violence" (Goodno, 1991: 59). Marcos's opponent, Sergio Osmena [Jr.], the Commonwealth president's son, said wryly afterwards: "We were outgunned, outgooned and outgold" (cited in Anderson, 1988: 18).
2. Marcos had stood trial for allegedly assassinating one of his father's political rivals in 1935, at the age of 18. He was acquitted, apparently, largely because of his eloquent pleading (Bonner, 1987: 11 ff.).
3. Aquino's version of events, whereby *he* was the intermediary, was disputed by Taruc himself, and by Ed Lansdale of the CIA (Bonner, 1987: 103).
4. In order to contest the presidency against Macapagal, who ran as a Liberal.
5. The 1969 devaluation dropped the value of the Philippine peso from 3.90 against the US dollar to 5.50. Thus in seven years the peso's value had depreciated by 40%.
6. Mendiola Bridge leads from the centre of Manila to the presidential palace of Malacanang. It has traditionally been the site of confrontation between opposition activists and the Philippine state.
7. Marcos *announced* the imposition of emergency rule on 22 September; his written *declaration* was backdated to 21 September owing to a superstitious belief he had in "lucky numbers" (Bonner, 1987: 100, fn.).
8. The allegation was made by an elderly Concon delegate, Eduardo Quintero. Although Marcos denied the allegations vigorously, "public regard for the convention dropped precipitously" (Wurfel, 1988: 110)
9. The imminent shift to EOI had been heralded by the Investment Incentives Act (Doronila, 1992: 162).

10. Head of this Ilocano clique was General Fabian Ver, the supposed mastermind of Nino Aquino's assassination. A childhood friend of Marcos, he rose from presidential chauffeur to palace security chief, and finally to armed forces chief-of-staff (Bonner, 1987: 14).
11. He had also told journalists that he would, as president, have no compunction in declaring martial law himself, if necessary (Wurfel, 1988:18).
12. Speculation was rife that Marcos had himself initiated the bombings to justify declaring an emergency (Bonner, 1987: 97).
13. Although a book by Gregg Jones (1989) inculpated the CPP, Primitivo Mijares, a journalist previously close to Marcos, claimed the bombing was "the handiwork of Marcos" (cited in Doronila, 1992: 165).
14. His off-the-cuff admission was overheard on Radio Veritas during the EDSA revolt.
15. The so-called "twelve disciples", consisting of trusted generals and Enrile himself, were apparently the only people to know the exact details of the announcement of Martial Law in advance.
16. Bearing in mind, that is, Aquino's acceptance of Martial Law as an instrument to quell political unrest.
17. *Asia Philippines Leader* was staffed by former journalists of the *Philippines Free Press*, after they had resigned as a consequence of their bitter union dispute with the Locsins (O/I: Lacaba).
18. The Mass Media Council, created in November 1972, was replaced by the Media Advisory Council in May 1973, along with the Bureau for Standards for Mass Media; these in turn were superseded by the Philippine Council for Print Media in November 1974.
19. He fled to the US with MAC funds and there published a damning expose of the Martial Law administration entitled The Conjugal Dictatorship of Ferdinand [sic] Marcos.
20. Marcos's "New Society" was supposedly based on an "ideology that emphasized individual and national discipline and the sacrifice of personal liberties for economic development" (Timberman, 1991: 91).
21. A slogan used about Franco's regime in Spain, which might be applied to any authoritarian regime where human rights are ignored.
22. The phrase has been used many times in connection with the social, economic and political situation in the Philippines. It may have originated with Bishop Fortich of Negros Occidental.
23. By 1985 they had reached a peak of 158,000.
24. Chiefly from oppositional periodicals published by the Philippine community exiled on the US West Coast and circulated clandestinely in the Philippines.

6. CHAPTER SIX. LIBERALISATION AND THE PRESS, 1981-86

6.1. Introduction

The years from 1981 to 1986 can, according to an "electoralist" definition of democratisation, be labelled a period of "liberalisation" of the authoritarian Marcos regime. The liberalisation process itself intensified after the assassination of former senator Ninoy Aquino in 1983. This chapter considers the growth of diverse opposition forces to Marcos and their increasing political activism. It examines the media's role in articulating and publicising the growing disaffection with the Marcos regime; the attempts by the government to stifle public criticism; and the ways different political actors sought, through alternative strategies, to circumvent the effective censorship of mainstream media. It highlights in particular the rise of the "opposition" and "alternative" presses; and it analyses the economic and political forces which facilitated their rise, and the regime's attempts to gag them. It also considers the pro-Marcos "crony" press's loss of credibility as an indicator of Marcos's own waning authority.

Different conduits of political expression during these mobilisations will be distinguished and appraised: the mainstream, crony-controlled press and broadcast media; the opposition and alternative, "mosquito" presses; and the international media and their "Xerox" and "Betamax" Philippine counterparts. There will be a special emphasis on the Philippine print media, and their behaviour as individual "watchdogs" and "conduits". This is because, in contrast with the broadcast media of radio and television, the print media were the principal site for the Philippine media's articulation of opposition to the Marcos regime from the early 1980s.

Another major theme of the thesis explored in this chapter is how ownership, control, and financing of the media, especially the press, may have affected media agendas, and the way these factors constrained challenges to the dominant agendas of the authoritarian Marcos regime. My case examples illustrate the daily workings of these constraints, and the way in which they interacted with wider political contestations for hegemony and power. The chapter also highlights the continuities in underlying media ownership patterns, in spite of the supposed hiatus of Martial Law. The reason for such a review is to ascertain whether factors like ownership and control do affect the setting of media agendas as strongly as certain academic commentators maintain (Schiller, 1973, 1989; Williams, 1974; Murdoch and Golding, 1974; Mattelart, 1979; Murdoch, 1982; Boyd-Barrett, 1977, 1982; Herman and Chomsky, 1988; Keane, 1991). How do such factors affect the media's potential role within democratisation processes? This chapter illustrates how contradictions of capitalist production, particularly in a Third World country, extend to the media. In times of crisis these contradictions can create, under an

authoritarian regime like Marcos's, opportunities for voicing opposition in unlikely places. Ownership, in other words, is not in all circumstances the sole, or even strongest, determinant of media content.

For example, in 1983 after the assassination of Ninoy Aquino, major political mobilisations against the regime and its political repressiveness and economic mismanagement gathered pace. Political organisations and informal groupings often used the print media, particularly English-language periodicals of the "alternative" press, to act as "conduits" for spreading information, building networks and debating new political agendas. This "conduit" function became, during this period of extreme political turbulence and struggle, as important as the traditional "watchdog" role; it responded to the Philippine reading public's "hunger for news". The popularity of non-mainstream media such as the "alternative" newspapers burgeoned as a consequence; conversely, the influence of the mainstream crony press, owned and controlled by those close to the Marcos government, declined steeply.

Questions arise from these case studies. What were the circumstances under which particular organs of the Philippine media and their practitioners sought to challenge the regime and the political *status quo*? Which particular class fractions were able to use the media to make these challenges; to whom did they appeal; and to what effect? How did the media themselves evolve in response to changing political forces provoked by the liberalisation of the authoritarian Marcos regime?

6.2. *The Philippine Broadsheet Press: Language, Costs, Readership*

The problem of establishing a "national language" as a factor in "nation-building", with its potential to unify or divide disparate groups, has beset many post-colonial societies: competing languages embody distinctive cultural and even social relations. As Gonzalez noted in 1980, English is used in the Philippines: "[...] in business, industry, academia, for negotiations in international circles and as a language for wider communication" (Gonzalez, 1980: 149). He makes the important socio-political point that:

Only when the elites occupying the higher strata of society and holding the reins of power [...] find a switch to nationalism economically advantageous will they, in effect, insist on their badge of linguistic identity and even make the sacrifice of losing their language of wider communication.

Gonzalez, 1980: 155.

Meanwhile, as "newspapers of record" for the "movers and shakers", selected English-language mainstream broadsheets have continued to claim the greatest political attention of all the Philippine media (Maslog, 1990: 26, 39-43).

Press circulation figures for national (Manila) daily newspapers appear to have increased fairly steadily since the mid-1960s. Accurate newspaper circulation figures are notoriously difficult to obtain in the Philippines even to this day, owing to the reluctance of many newspaper proprietors to publish independently audited figures. They prefer to claim inflated estimates, on which their advertising rates can then be based. Recent (1992) estimates of total circulation figures for national English-language dailies published in Manila, for example, have varied between 1.3 and 2 million (cited in IBON, 1992(a): 2).

About 60% of total newspaper circulation has consisted of English-language publications throughout the period 1960-1990 according to Maslog (1990: 26). The cultural dominance of English as the discourse of the elite has reinforced the political dominance of Manila as the centre of a traditionally over-centralised administrative system, where economic and political business is still conducted largely in English. It could be argued, furthermore, that liberalisation under the Marcos regime spread from the metropolitan centre outwards, with the English-language press as one of its major vectors.

Table 3. Circulation Figures and Numbers of Manila Dailies¹.

(The number of titles appear in square brackets.)

537,000 [11] in 1963, before Marcos became president.

985,000 [17] in 1970, before Martial Law.

1,000,000 [15] in 1981, at the lifting of Martial Law.

1,200,000 [23] in 1986, as Aquino became president.

1,600,000 [31] in 1992, before Ramos became president.

Sources: Lent, 1982: 272, 279-80; Bodegon, 1986: 28; Pineda-Ofreneo, 1986: 88; Maslog, 1990: 26, 39-43; IBON, 1992(a): 4.

Not only has the Philippine press been predominantly metropolitan in focus, it has also been targeted at particular social classes. Cost and cultural predispositions ensure a relatively narrow readership. In 1968 before Martial Law, for example, a Filipino worker would have paid 20 days' wages for a year's newspaper subscription. A Manila newspaper cost four to six times its comparable counterpart in New York, as a ratio of average earnings. Small wonder then that those able, and willing, to afford a Philippine newspaper were predominantly the metropolitan middle and upper classes (Pineda-Ofreneo, 1986: 129 ff.).

6.3. Lifting Martial Law: Tentative Liberalisation, 1981-1983

Liberalisation has been seen as the first step towards (re-) democratisation (O'Donnell, *et al.*, 1986; Stepan, 1986; Ethier, 1990; Wurfel, 1990), through the "permitted" but restricted voicing of opposition

to an authoritarian regime. Yet liberalisation did not, in the Philippine case, move in any unilinear, unforced progression, with a predictable or even steady movement towards a "democratic transition". The struggle to influence the institutions of state and class power on behalf of particular interests was intense, but it was matched by the resistance of the Marcos regime to substantive change. In the situation of economic and political crisis which grew slowly from 1981 and then burgeoned after the Aquino assassination, opposition to the regime began to be articulated through a number of print media outlets. Domestic elite fractions coalesced increasingly around agendas which, at the very least, attempted to criticise the regime's economic performance. Yet the government, acting through its military and para-military arms, often reacted repressively to gag this criticism.

In the Philippines a factor which laid bare the Marcos regime's gross economic mismanagement had been, as in Brazil, the international oil price rise of 1979. As Timberman notes:

The hike in oil prices increased the country's import bill at the same time that the global recession caused the demand and prices of most of its exports to decline, creating a growing trade deficit. [...] Higher prices of oil and other manufactured imports fuelled domestic inflation, undermining the value of wages and salaries. The combination of these conditions resulted in the collapse and government bail-out of crony firms beginning in 1980 and 1981; large capital flight in 1981 and 1982; a virtual standstill in economic growth by 1982; and an inability to pay its foreign debt in 1983.

Timberman, 1991, 112-3

Despite growing discontents in many sectors of society in the early '80s, Marcos retained control of the major instruments of coercion - the military, police and para-military forces. He was backed by US economic and political support, in the form of aid (especially military aid), and US state visits, invitations and pronouncements designed to bolster confidence in the regime (Bonner, 1987: 313-9).

In this context "liberalisation" became a regime response, offering piecemeal short-term concessions, where it hoped to retrieve political control in the longer term. Liberalisation, in short, was - in the Philippine case at least - the uneven and uneasy outcome of political struggle between conflicting political interests, where forces for change had temporarily gained the political advantage as a consequence of deepening regime crisis.

By the early 1980s the Philippine public had already shown themselves to be more courageous than their stifled mainstream media. Mass protests organised by students and workers against draconian anti-labour measures in the mid-70s had served as recruitment bases for the National Democratic Front (NDF), popularly known as the "natdems". This became an umbrella organisation for left-wing political protest, though it had perforce to remain underground throughout the period. The NDF was indisputably dominated by the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), but it also included other radical groups and activists. Allied to the NDF were left trade unions, peasant, women and youth movements, and

associations of teachers, students and artists, together with some radical church-based groups. Collectively these sectoral organisations, mainly underground and severely harassed by the Marcos government, became the backbone of the welgang bayan or popular [general] strikes (Lane, 1990: 6).

The more progressive grassroots wing of the church, like the Christians for National Liberation (CNL) and some Basic Christian Communities (BCCs), allied themselves to the NDF either secretly or overtly (Youngblood, 1990: Chapter 4 and passim). These movements reflected the shared values of "liberation theology" and "conscientisation", as instruments of struggle against poverty and social injustice. These ideas had already been articulated by Paolo Freire and other radical church workers in Brazil and other parts of Latin America (see Freire, 1971; Schiller, 1976). Yet they also drew on a specifically Philippine experience of peasant movements and rural rebellion against the landed oligarchy dating back to the 1920s. These new church and social activists rapidly found themselves in conflict with the military and para-military arms of coercion. Human rights abuses were continually committed by the military, in their counterinsurgency campaigns. Often the victims were innocent villagers who happened to live in NPA-controlled areas and were therefore automatically suspected of supporting the communist rebels. In the rural hinterlands human rights violations against opponents of the regime had the effect of recruiting many people seeking protection or redress into radical organisations, including the NPA itself. Specialist organisations with religious affiliations were set up to monitor these human rights violations. Task Force Detainees (TFD), for example, was backed by the Association of Major Religious Superiors of the Philippines (AMRSP). Together with the National Secretariat for Social Action, Justice and Peace (NASSA), TFD proposed far more radical solutions in the search for social justice than the staid church hierarchy were comfortable with (Youngblood, 1990: 69).

The causes of popular opposition to the Marcos regime in the early '80s may therefore be summarised as: mismanagement of the economy which had severely exacerbated poverty and the widening wealth gap between rich and poor; the concomitant social tensions and conflicts which this situation gave rise to; and the growing human rights abuses which were a direct consequence of militarisation. This last was, in turn, a largely ineffective attempt by the state to deal with these growing conflicts through increased repression. In spite of this, the CPP and its military wing, the NPA, together with the united front organisation of the NDF, were all growing in strength. They recruited disaffected members of popular and intellectual classes in both urban and rural bases (Schirmer, 1987: 315-8; see also, Timberman, 1991: 136-9).

Despite these growing social tensions and the resulting challenges to state authority, Marcos had felt secure enough, with what he assumed to be solid support in the military, to lift Martial Law in 1981. Ever the showman, and with an eye to the international media, he timed a sham re-election exercise to coincide with the inauguration of his friend, US President Reagan, and with a pending visit to Manila by the Pope. The US administration appeared content with this charade. Vice-President Bush was sent

to Marcos's own reinauguration ceremony and publicly praised his host for his "adherence to democratic principle and to the democratic processes" - for which he was roundly castigated by both local oppositionists and US newspaper editors, including the *New York Times* (Bonner, 1987: 245-6; 307-8).

Marcos's immediate schedule may have been determined as a showpiece for his international audience. There were, however, more serious considerations in his calculations. One was the need for more international injections of financial support for the ailing, and grossly mismanaged, economy (Schirmer, 1987: 264-7). Political liberalisation was partly a sop to those international critics of Martial Law, particularly liberal US Democrats, who had voted to cut US Congressional aid to the Philippines a year earlier (Bonner, 1987: 306). Marcos took the precaution, however, of retaining repressive secret decrees within his executive purview (*ibid.*: 302). These could be activated at will, should he feel his grip on the country's sources of economic and political power to be slipping. Even without knowing that these "fall-back" emergency measures were in place, many sceptics initially saw the lifting of Martial Law as a merely cosmetic restitution of political freedoms (Bonner, 1987: 301; Lopez, 1985 (a); Roces, 1985). Marcos himself doubtless surmised that he had secured a new lease of life for his authoritarian rule, as he rechristened his "New Society" the "New Republic" (see Magsanoc, 1981, 1984; and below).

In the situation of continuing external support for Marcos from US administrators and multinationals, and uncertainty about the tangibility of "restored freedoms", oppositional pressures could not be steadily applied. Once Marcos adjudged that, in order to secure continued international economic and political support, he had acquiesced sufficiently in international demands for liberalisation, he was liable to clamp down again on his bolder critics. Coercion by any of a variety of state forces (the military, the paramilitary, the police or the judiciary) was a very real possibility at such moments, as Pineda-Ofreneo points out:

[...] the climate of fear was still very much in evidence then [after the formal lifting of Martial Law] because of the continued operation of repressive decrees and [the] institution of new and erstwhile "secret" decrees.

Pineda-Ofreneo, 1986: 145

In the context of constraints on the media, Pineda-Ofreneo cites Presidential Decree No.1737, empowering the president to close "subversive publications and other media of mass communication" (*ibid.*), a power which was used to considerable effect. The reaction of Philippine media practitioners to the lifting of Martial Law in 1981 was, therefore, initially cautious. There was on the one hand a certain shame-facedness among those who had formerly been proud of their "professional ethos" as political "watch-dogs". Their subjection to censorship under Martial Law was now seen as professionally ignominious and increasingly onerous (Pineda-Ofreneo, 1986: 145; Soriano, 1981: 16; Magsanoc, 1985: 19-21; National Press Club, 1983: 67-9)². On the other hand questions of individual survival - in the face of military suppression or professional banishment - remained uppermost in the minds of many

journalists, who could not be blamed for remaining circumspect about the durability and benefits of a "liberalisation" which remained so skeletal in practice.

6.4. The Aquino Assassination, Opposition and the Press, 1983

It was Ninoy Aquino's assassination and the resultant public outcry, which emboldened many journalists -and, more importantly, their editors - into public criticism of the regime. This new boldness was reinforced by growing public demand for the "facts" surrounding the assassination. The response to that demand - an increased supply of oppositional newsheets - was at one level the result of economic forces which might apply long-term in any capitalist industrial sector: an expanding and profitable market encourages new entrants.

Yet such enterprise remained, at both economic and political levels, extremely hazardous, even after 1983. There was the danger that an "over-critical" newspaper and its presses might be confiscated or impounded by the regime; and that its proprietor, editor and staff might suffer severe harassment, including imprisonment or even in extreme cases "salvaging"³. Thus the media's role in liberalisation was tortuous and complex, at times in the vanguard of criticism of the regime, at other times placatory or beating a temporary retreat.

After the Aquino assassination, for the regime's growing number of bourgeois and middle-class critics, the scale of the Marcos regime's fraud, corruption, and economic mismanagement was becoming too blatant to ignore. It resulted in increased foreign business scepticism, and in open hostility from domestic business opponents who found themselves stymied by Marcos cronies, without any of the traditional share-out of the (by now fast-dwindling) spoils. Middle class sectors such as university intellectuals, state employees and business professionals were also feeling the pinch in terms of job and salary shrinkage. They too became more vocal in their criticisms. New alliances with the "nationalist bourgeoisie", and old ones with underground activists and pre-Martial Law radicals, were tentatively sought out or reactivated (Schirmer, 1987: 284-312; Timberman, 1991: 129-136).

Even before the Aquino assassination the crisis in the Philippine economy had been deepening. The perennial balance-of-payments deficit and capital flight had grown markedly worse from 1981 onwards⁴. The Marcos regime was forced to approach the World Bank-IMF for a loan of US\$536.7 million, made on special drawing rights, in early 1983 in order to meet the balance-of-payments crisis and government budget deficits. The IMF insisted on a tough austerity programme, including the ever-sensitive issue of raising oil prices by ending government subsidies. In mid-1983, at a time when global oil prices were actually falling, this was a highly unpopular policy (*FEER*, "The economy may be Marcos' nemesis", 4 August 1983, p.30; see also, Timberman, 1991: 135). The IMF and World Bank had already imposed

a new Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP). That included demands for devaluation and further trade liberalisation. These were the conditions for additional loans to the regime (Schirmer, 1987: 265-7).

Economic "liberalisation" meant that the penetration of the economy by multinational corporations was to be further accelerated. These requirements would also hasten the demise of struggling small local enterprises, overwhelmed by yet more competitive imports. Consequently severe job losses were borne in both the public and private sectors. As in the early 1970s prior to Martial Law, public protests began to mount. Marcos was also rumoured to be in poor health. The succession became a cause of concern - to oppositional oligarchs, to multinational investors, and to those in the US State Department who feared the perpetuation of the Marcos dynasty in the shape of his ambitious wife, Imelda.

Ninoy Aquino had been in exile in the USA since 1980, when Marcos had released him from jail to undergo heart surgery. Aquino judged the heightening crisis to be an opportune moment to return to the Philippines. He had picked up on the rumours about Marcos's failing health⁵. He thought that by confronting the Marcos regime with its record of corruption, economic ineptitude, and socially disruptive policies he could put himself in the running for the presidency again. He was assassinated on August 21 1983, as he stepped onto the tarmac at Manila International Airport from the plane bringing him home.

Unfortunately for Marcos the scene had been witnessed by the world's media. Domestic and international outrage was intense. Yet the Philippine mainstream crony press virtually ignored both the assassination and Aquino's public wake and funeral, attended by over a million grieving Filipinos. Commentators date the complete and final loss of the crony press's public credibility from their failure to report the assassination and its emotional aftermath (see for example, Pineda-Ofreneo, 1986; de Jesus: O/I).

6.5. *The Crony Press Discredited*

The decline of the crony press was hastened by an active boycott by left and liberal groups. Left-activist journalists⁶ had already floated the idea of a boycott at a private consultation on Philippine press freedom, where they protested against the Marcos regime's draconian curbs on the media during a supposed period of "liberalisation". Their meeting took place, coincidentally, on the day before the Aquino assassination (Pineda-Ofreneo, 1986: 166). They subsequently linked their call to that of those liberal-left forces uniting under the banners of JAJA and ATOM (see below). Thus the boycott of crony media joined the revived "Parliament of the Streets" as another tactic in the overall oppositional strategy to oust Marcos. Street sales of the "alternatives" soared (*FEER*, "A time of reckoning", 29 September, 1983, p.13; Burgos: O/I).

One informant, Melinda Quintos de Jesus, exemplified the route a number of middle-class journalists with liberal views followed from mainstream to opposition press in the early 1980s. She had been an erstwhile journalist on the crony *Bulletin Today*, but grew increasingly uneasy at the reports she received in Manila of burgeoning human rights abuses by the military in rural areas, particularly against priests. She managed to "smuggle" a few of these reports onto the inside pages of the *Bulletin*, and was subsequently dismissed. She joined the Catholic opposition weekly news journal *Veritas* on its launch in 1983 and stayed there until after the EDSA revolt in 1986. Here her reports received a more supportive welcome from the editor, Felix Bautista. *Veritas* had been set up soon after the Aquino assassination by leading church and business figures, with financial backing from leading Makati businessmen.

De Jesus told me of the sense of public outrage, not only at the assassination itself but also at the regime's attempts to suppress reporting of the event and its aftermath - the funeral and subsequent public protests - in the crony press: "It was the sheer enormity of the lie which was flung in the public's face that begot the idea: the crony press is definitely not telling us the truth!" (de Jesus: O/I)⁷.

Like de Jesus, many liberal and left-leaning journalists migrated from the mainstream to the oppositional presses after the Aquino assassination. Some wrote for them *gratis* under a pseudonym, whilst retaining their bread-winning jobs in the crony media. Young middle-class women journalists were often married to upper-middle class executives and were consequently freer of the burden of bread-winning than their ageing male counterparts. These women journalists tended to be more outspoken in their criticisms of the regime. Once the already waning credibility of the "crony" mainstream press had been lost beyond redemption, the alternative "mosquito"⁸ and "opposition" presses began to reach a wider audience.

6.6. *The Opposition Gathers Momentum*

The Aquino assassination precipitated economic collapse and the accelerated flight of both foreign and domestic capital. Public indignation at the assassination coalesced popular opposition to the regime. It was immediately rumoured that the murder had been underwritten by the military top-brass, under the assumption of total immunity⁹. Massive street demonstrations now included the active participation of the middle classes. Among the initial coalitions between centre and left forces were the "Justice for Aquino, Justice for All" (JAJA) movement and the August Twenty-One¹⁰ Movement (ATOM) led by Ninoy's brother, "Butz" Aquino, a former film actor. In 1984 JAJA gave way to CORD, the Coalition of Organizations for the Restoration of Democracy, which emerged to coordinate a new "Parliament of the Streets" and fight the 1984 elections for the national assembly.

Using boycott threats to win electoral concessions from Marcos, CORD and allied congresses were able to maintain a level of political activity which sustained the momentum of anti-Marcos feeling after the Aquino assassination. The "Parliament of the Streets" was modelled on the popular mobilisations of the early '70s, prior to the imposition of Martial Law. It was supplemented by other initiatives like the lakbayan, or "people's marches", from the provinces to Manila; by welgang bayan, or "people's [general] strikes"; by rallies, and their accompanying leaflets and placards; and even by "people's jogs" (Lane, 1990: 4-5). Butz Aquino became the most popular figure among the revitalised "socdems"; after 1983, ATOM gave them a much higher profile in mass mobilisations (Lane, 1990: 7). Under their aegis an umbrella organisation, BANDILA¹¹, was formed in June 1985, with Butz Aquino once more prominent (*ibid.*). In addition, groups of human rights and legal aid organisations formed a loose grouping known collectively as "Liberal Democrats" or "libdems" (*ibid.*). They included the Free Legal Assistance Group (FLAG) and MABINI, a group of lawyers which, among other actions, defended journalists prosecuted by the military.

Other new organisations were appearing on the "natdem" ("national democratic", or radical) left. They began to advance specific cause-oriented agendas within a generally radical-oppositionist stance. Typical of these was GABRIELA, an acronym for General Assembly Binding Women for Reforms, Integrity, Equality, Leadership, and Action¹². GABRIELA was formed in March 1984 and within a year had organised a "women's week" in Manila to publicise the regime's frequent abuses against women, including torture, rape and "salvaging" - all methods used habitually by the military and paramilitary forces throughout the country (Schirmer, 1987: 309-312). GABRIELA was successful in putting forward a specific women's agenda, to include women's liberation and support for the struggles of women workers and peasants, within the general demands for Marcos's removal and the restoration of democracy.

The business elites too were forming their own anti-Marcos organisations in the Makati downtown business district. Affluent executives joined with office employees. Telephone Yellow Pages were shredded, to shower Makati protests with confetti and streamers from office tower blocks, in solidarity with the passing marchers. Yellow became the colour of pro-Aquino protest¹³. This new liberal "dissent culture" of the middle classes complemented the more confrontational strikes and protests of the radicalised proletariat, from urban factory workers and slum dwellers through to peasants and rural labourers.

Marcos responded to the unrest throughout the country with increased repression and tactics of outright terror: violent dispersals, tear-gas, arrests, torture, "salvagings" and disappearances (Lane, 1990: 5). Yet once mobilised, the oft-denigrated "common tao", or ordinary Filipinos and Filipinas, were no longer so easily cowed. The "Parliament of the Streets" organised ad hoc street-corner demonstrations in Manila which were often literally "running protests", able to disband and melt into the crowds at the

first sign of police repression. In this increasingly rebellious atmosphere, oppositional newspapers grew more outspoken.

6.7. Press Characteristics during "Liberalisation", 1981-1986

It is useful here to distinguish between the three basic types of press found during the liberalisation period. These were the crony, opposition, and "mosquito" or "alternative" presses - although opposition and alternative media were sometimes bracketed together simply as the "anti-Marcos" press, in contradistinction to the mainstream press which at that time was solidly "pro-Marcos". The three types are classifiable by the interrelated characteristics of ownership and finances, political ideology, and attitude to the Marcos regime.

The mainstream newspapers were owned exclusively by Marcos cronies. They had been allowed to dominate the market almost unchallenged from 1972 until 1983. They had therefore been content to adhere generally to a pro-government line in their reports and commentaries. This meant that the "responsible" among them - chiefly the English-language broadsheets - advocated the precepts of "developmental journalism". This had been decreed as official policy by Marcos's press office from the mid-1970s. "Developmental journalism" was becoming politically and academically fashionable in debates on the international media; these were to culminate in the publication of the UNESCO McBride Report, Many Voices One World, in 1980. This report invoked a "New World Information and Communications Order" (NWICO), an idealistic attempt to redress imbalances in the news flows between the developed countries of the industrialised North and the developing countries of the South, which heavily favoured the former (see Nordenstreng and Schiller, 1979; McBride, 1980; Shafer, 1990).

"Developmental journalism" was originally intended, in parallel with Third World pressure towards a fairer hearing in the international press, to encourage among the general Third World populace a better understanding of policies for wealth creation and "nation-building" promoted at international and governmental levels. Unfortunately, in the Philippines at least, the phrase rapidly became in the Martial Law era a euphemism for government propaganda. As Shafer points out:

Both the Marcos government and many mass media academics thought the press should be harnessed as an agent of development, with less emphasis on its watchdog role. The government, however, was intent on utilizing the new development communication model as a tool of repression and as a means to maintain itself in power. It was this perversion that lost those newspapers committing themselves fully to it the respect and allegiance of the best and brightest Philippine journalists and of the consumers of the newspapers and information they produced.

Shafer, 1991: 6.

This "perversion" earned the crony press the stigma, largely deserved, of being uncritically and irredeemably pro-government.

The opposition presses on the other hand were owned by a disparate mixture of business interests and erstwhile mainstream journalists. As they evolved after 1983, they were primarily concerned with ousting Marcos, and replacing him with someone more amenable to the interests they represented. Their political agendas, rudimentary as they often were, were voiced by opposition politicians ranging from the essentially conservative Salvador Laurel to the pro-liberal Cory Aquino and her brother-in-law, "Butz". Together they reflected shades of opinion from the traditional oligarchs and their political emissaries, the conservative "trapos"¹⁴, through senior "moderates" within the church hierarchy like Cardinal Sin to "modernising" liberal businessmen. These latter groups were prepared to support opposition media like *Veritas* financially. Their underlying proposition was "Marcos must go!" and they were prepared to adduce evidence of regime failures - in the form of corruption and human rights abuses, for example - to support their demand.

From its extremely modest beginnings around 1977-79 as underground and college campus news-sheets, the "mosquito" alternative press had, by the early 1980s, become bolder in its criticism of Marcos. Publishers of a few of these "mosquito" news-sheets - most of whom had previously been jobbing left-wing journalists - had a radical agenda which not only criticised Marcos as a "US puppet" but also proposed sweeping reforms to tackle the nation's ills. There was clearly considerable overlap between the agendas of the "opposition" and "mosquito" alternative presses, which may account for their being sometimes lumped together. What distinguished them, from the crony press and from each other, was largely the class interests that they represented, and their financial support - or lack of it.

The mainstream crony press had in effect received the initial protection of the Marcos government, in the form of assured market dominance and in certain cases the invaluable material advantage of acquiring the printing presses and other sequestered capital assets of the pre-1972 oligarch newspapers. They also had, in 1981, a monopoly on newsprint from the government (Youngblood, 1981: 727). It is small wonder that the crony press barons had no wish to "bite the hand that fed them" by any effective criticism of the regime.

Joaquin Rocas, the former owner of the *Manila Times*, estimated in 1981 that to restart his newspaper would cost \$13.5 million (Youngblood, 1981: 726). This kind of major investment allied to the uncertainties of a regime which seemed all too ready to level subversion charges against any over-critical media, made many former media proprietors understandably chary of reopening their outlets. It is perhaps all the more remarkable then - such was the indignation with the regime after the Aquino murder in 1983 - that normally circumspect businessmen should choose to invest in a project that was so economically and politically precarious. It could be argued however that, moral indignation apart, their

long-term interests in ridding the Philippines of Marcos became a goal which overrode short-term caution. The post-1983 opposition press, then, had the substantial backing of Makati businessmen and, in at least one case, the Church.

Of the three types of press, the independent "mosquito" news-sheets had by far the greatest financial struggle to stay afloat. Many of them eschewed "capitalist advertising", even had it been available to them. They were therefore mainly reliant on individual subscriptions and, as their popularity grew, on street sales¹⁵. Their appeal was clearly to a "thinking" public, who had grown tired of the dull conformism and lack of credibility of the crony press, and who demanded analyses and programmes of radical change to address the burgeoning economic and political crisis. Such a public was to be found among the urban, mainly metropolitan, middle class, which was small as a proportion of total population (around 15%) - but by no means homogeneous. Middle class fractions found, for example, among executive and administrative levels of private enterprise might differ in their economic and political affinities from those who worked in public service sectors. These in turn might diverge in political outlook from the even smaller, but more vocal, middle class sector working in non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and with cause-oriented groups in people's organisations (POs).

Clearly these groups shared economic hardship under the Marcos regime. All three fractions, for example, suffered like the majority of Filipinos from the job contractions resulting from the economic crisis of the early '80s - but in varying degrees. Equally there might be issues which divided them. Human rights abuses, for example, could affect NGO and PO workers in the field more directly than private sector executives in Manila. The political interests of these class fractions and sectors as newspaper readers were therefore disparate. Yet they all shared a growing mistrust of the crony press's blinkered reporting of the Marcos government's activities and performance.

Another factor affecting readership was cost. All the opposition and alternative periodicals were priced between P1.25 and P4 per issue, which at the time could represent half a day's wage to an industrial worker in Manila. With the two notable exceptions of *Masa* and *Kalayaan*, moreover, oppositional periodicals were written largely in the elite language, English. Their appeal was consequently confined to the liberal urban upper and middle classes who saw Marcos as the chief obstacle to their economic aspirations: a liberal economy untrammelled by the frustrations and inefficiencies of "cronyism", and a vaguely liberal political agenda to accompany it.

The "mosquito" press, conversely, articulated some of the programmes of the "socdems" and "natdems". In a 1985 survey conducted for the Department of Mass Communications at the University of the Philippines, one commentator noted that after 1984 and the first anniversary of the Aquino murder there was a move away from the initial emotionalism, where Aquino items dominated a third of all stories and editorials, towards more issue-based articles. These included (in descending order): business affairs and

the worsening economy; the "first couple" (that is, the Marcoses); the military, and human rights abuses. At the same time, this commentator noted, "the moderate [press voices] seemed to be gaining ground" (Yapo, 1985: 57-64).

Shafer has characterised alternative "mosquito" press coverage as:

[...] engaged in the adversarial or "watchdog" function to an extreme, while providing a wide-range of expose-type stories highlighting the plight of the rural and urban poor, usually concluding that their plight was attributable to policies and programmes of the Marcos government or to its corrupt practices.

Shafer, 1991: 7.

The three divisions of the print media - "crony", "oppositional" and "alternative" - according to ownership, finance and ideology, were not to be found in broadcasting. All television stations were either owned directly by Marcos cronies or operated by the state with Marcos appointees in control. During the Martial Law period few radio stations were able to operate beyond the purview of Marcos cronies either. Yet two which gained a reputation as "critical voices" after the Aquino assassination were *Radyo Bombo* in Iloilo, and *Radio Veritas* in Metro Manila. The latter, significantly, also had the backing of the Catholic church, the social institution which was becoming increasingly the vocal channel of "mainstream opposition" supported by liberals and Christian democrats.

In spite of these emboldened anti-regime voices, the penalties for incurring Marcos's displeasure, or that of the military, could still be extreme. Both Marcos and the military acted arbitrarily and often violently to criticism, however well-justified. In the case of the military this could mean that a newspaper editor might be slapped with an extortionate libel suit, or that a minor journalist filing a critical report, particularly in the provinces, might be "salvaged" or "disappeared". Between 1976 and 1986, 25 journalists were killed in the Philippines - the highest mortality rate for journalists in the world (cited in Maslog, 1990: 44). Such "uncertainties" remained throughout the "liberalisation" period from 1981 to 1986. They created a political environment in which certain more adventurous media practitioners played "cat and mouse" with the regime, testing the limits of its tolerance, and often resorting in their reportages to innuendo, scarcely disguised irony, or even fables (Letty Magsanoc, Ninez Cacho-Olivares, Sheila Coronel: **O/Is**).

6.8. Muffled Protest in the Crony Press: a Case Study

Some of the cronies' media operations betrayed contradictions which reflect interestingly on Herman's assertion that "the media are [...] no monolith" (Herman, 1986: 173 - see also Chapter Six, below). They also somewhat undermine his and Chomsky's "propaganda model", which predicts that mainstream

media will hew in the main to elite interests (Herman and Chomsky, 1988: Chapter 1). The model appears not to fully account for the "political space", or more accurately "limits of tolerance" which the media are able to create under specific circumstances: in the Philippine case, those of regime breakdown and acute crisis. A good example of this process is provided by Hans Menzi's publications in the early 1980s. The case illustrates how, within a "liberalising" authoritarian regime, pressures towards greater accountability - for instance, in the realm of human rights abuses - can surface in the media.

Hans Menzi was by far the most experienced newspaper proprietor among the cronies, and was something of an anomaly among them. Former journalists who had worked for him on *Bulletin Today* and *Panorama* spoke of him to me with affection. Ninez Olivarez recalled his passion for opera, and Melinda de Jesus insisted that he was genuinely fond of Marcos. That he was not a sycophant is amply demonstrated by the mutual antipathy between him and the "First Lady", Imelda Marcos.

However Letty Magsanoc, then *Panorama* editor, recalled that a newspaper series she wrote in May 1981 on child prostitution in the Philippines was suppressed by Menzi at the official behest of Malacanang (the presidential palace), whereupon Magsanoc remonstrated with him: "Why do you have to jump every time [Imelda Marcos] tells you to jump? You are so powerful, you have a chain of publications." Yet, she concluded, "I think he [was] scared of the First Lady" (Magsanoc in National Press Club, 1983: 21).

Alongside *Bulletin Today*, Menzi published a Sunday supplement, *Panorama*, under the editorship of Letty Magsanoc, which began to explore issues more critically. A less complaisant voice had first been effectively raised in June 1980 by young investigative journalists in another of Menzi's minority periodicals, *Who*. This had a much smaller circulation of 15,000-25,000 than *Panorama*'s estimated 360,000 (Pineda-Ofreneo, 1986: 148). Beginning in 1980 both the mainstream *Panorama* and the minority *Who* had begun to publish satirical or critical columns, and occasional investigative reports, authored chiefly by young middle-class women journalists¹⁶. Menzi himself called them banteringly his "troublesome women". One of the articles published became a *cause celebre* for liberalising journalists, because it set a precedent as a direct challenge to Marcos's authority.

This was Letty Magsanoc's "There Goes the New Society; Welcome the New Republic". It heaped gentle scorn on Marcos's rhetoric ("ringing phrases reminiscent of Franklin D. Roosevelt's and John F. Kennedy's inaugural speeches"), whilst reminding her readers of the "suspicions of connivance, corruption and dishonest counting of votes" in previous Marcos elections and plebiscites (*Panorama*, 12 July 1981). She also drew attention to the "appallingly inadequate" economy, and "mounting cries against cronyism, political corruption in high and all places [...]" (*ibid.*).

Marcos's displeasure at these comments was immediately conveyed. The day after publication, three high-ranking government officials threatened Menzi with libel and subversion charges. Magsanoc was forced to resign as *Panorama* editor (National Press Club, 1984: 15) to avert a crippling libel suit. Both *Panorama* and *Bulletin Today* continued to publish occasional pieces of trenchant journalism. In 1982 Ma.Ceres Doyo wrote an article in *Panorama* charting military abuses on the Bataan peninsula ("Forty Years after the Fall [to Japanese invaders], Bataan is Again under Siege"; reprinted in National Press Club, 1984: 25-31). The military again reacted angrily, on this occasion summoning six of Menzi's "troublesome women" to a special committee hearing before the Armed Forces' National Intelligence Board, the highest intelligence body in the land¹⁷. The women filed a counter-petition with the Supreme Court, protesting against their treatment by the board; the government thereupon "dismantled" the special committee.

Instead, in January 1983, Doyo and her editor, Domini Torresvillas-Suarez, received from the general in command of Bataan a libel writ for P10 million (approximately \$500,000). This enormous claim, it was stated, should "serve as deterrence to others who may be tempted to commit the same [...]". A left-liberal group of defence lawyers, MABINI, successfully had the libel suit quashed, but in the short term it doubtless had a sobering effect on the more timorous members of the crony press fraternity. Certainly *Panorama*, and to a much lesser extent, the *Bulletin*, were exceptional among the crony newspapers for their outspokenness¹⁸.

In attempting to explain Menzi's apparently anomalous liberal attitude as a crony proprietor in the early '80s, it is necessary to look more closely at his media undertakings. Menzi was torn between two demands, one economic, the other political. On the one hand his professional "business instincts" as a serious entrepreneur, whose major enterprise was media ownership, gave him a keen interest in maintaining circulation figures through a "competitive product" - that is, newspapers which readers would buy for their genuine news content, rather than the bland offerings of the remainder of the crony press.

On the other hand Menzi owed political allegiance to Marcos, and feared his wife Imelda. This latter factor was clearly also a political consideration, in that Imelda was powerfully allied to the military through her strong friendship with General Ver. Between them they could have shut down any or all of Menzi's media holdings. It was doubtless Menzi's close friendship with the president himself that protected him on those several occasions when his periodicals were particularly outspoken against the military. When compared with the other crony media owners, Menzi emerges as the one most interested in his holdings as a sharply competitive *economic* undertaking. He was arguably more economically exposed, and consequently more committed, in his media undertakings, than Benedicto or Romualdez. They were feather-bedded by their other far more profitable undertakings, where competition was less

fierce or even non-existent; the Tuveras by comparison were light-weight dilettantes (Pineda-Ofreneo, 1986: 149 ff).

Apart from Menzi, all the other three crony media owners took their protection by the government as the political condition for their general economic buoyancy. They therefore devoted more effort to remaining politically acceptable to the Marcoses than to competition on "media product" lines. The proprietors themselves, both Benedicto and Romualdez, were noted for their personal interference in editorial decisions, in order to maintain strict compliance with Malacanang edicts. Menzi on the whole preferred the media proprietor's traditional role of standing by his editor, with the minimum of interference (Magsanoc: O/I). Once liberalisation was declared official policy, it was legitimate for a proprietor with vaguely liberal economic instincts like Menzi to allow his younger staff, including his "troublesome women", some critical leeway. The other media cronies subscribed, by contrast, to the protectionism of the traditional conservative oligarchy, clinging to their economic privileges by acquiescence and collaboration with the regime.

It is nevertheless remarkable in retrospect that Menzi allowed the minority circulation *Who* to continue to publish its acerbic criticisms of the regime for five years. Even then it was his management, not he, who killed it off in 1984, as Menzi himself lay terminally ill. Two explanations for his support of what was in effect an anti-government periodical have been offered. The first is that *Who* was considered too small to make much impact and was tolerated by the government as token proof of "democracy" for its international audience (National Press Club, 1985: 31). A claim by a former editorial staff member, that the management refused to expand the magazine's circulation even following the increase in demand after Aquino's assassination, would seem to bear this out.

Another theory maintains that Menzi was astute enough to look beyond the Marcos era, and to hope that the existence of *Who* and *Panorama* would ensure goodwill and, more concretely, continuity for his publishing conglomerate with a future anti-Marcos regime (*ibid.*). This theory tallies with the general assessment of Menzi that, unlike the other crony newspaper publishers, he had a canny sense of survival in *the media world* (as distinct from his, and their, other crony enterprises). It is unarguable that he allowed a critical voice to be heard in 1980, even before Martial Law had been lifted. It was in this "nursery of dissent" that a number of opposition and alternative journalists cut their professional teeth.

In sum there was considerable ambivalence in Menzi's relations with "the First Couple", and hence the regime generally, which allowed him to regard his media organisation with a modicum of manoeuvrability, and this allowed individual periodicals within his "stable" to "test the limits of liberalisation", only to retreat in those instances where Marcos considered they had overstepped such limits. Menzi therefore permitted some of his more courageous staff a flexibility in what he allowed to

be reported which was not found elsewhere in the crony press. However, overall his periodicals had no independence from the regime in any real sense.

It would probably be accurate to say that by August 1983 the Philippine mainstream print media were "slowly returning to their pre-martial law accounts of sensational crimes and society news" (Dresang, 1985: 38), with "sporadic criticism of government policies". Yet the "chilling effect" of the equally sporadic harassment of journalists meant that most were "still scared" and that there were "whole subject areas that [were] never treated in the [mainstream] press because they [were] seen as inappropriate" (*ibid.*). These subject areas were the new "market niche" which the oppositional presses were poised to fill at the fortuitous moment - the Aquino assassination of August 1983.

6.9. The Opposition and "Mosquito" Presses, 1983-86

Not all the political forces opposed to Marcos were necessarily radical, progressive, or even reformist. The conservative bloc simply wanted to get rid of Marcos in order to recoup their pre-1972 status of economic and political privilege. What united them was an elitist, exclusionary approach to the division and distribution of economic and political power. They were happy to negotiate behind the political scenes with those they saw as leading elite political actors, domestic and foreign, who had a vested interest in a return to power of the old oligarchy and the *status quo ante*.

At the other end of the political spectrum, certain - but by no means all - radical political groups asserted that the only effective way to change the structures of the Philippine polity and economy was through armed revolution. Between them stood various liberal and left groupings who wished to introduce progressive social, economic and political reforms, either to promote "modernisation" of the economy, or to address deeper, more radical issues of social justice.

The political labels also corresponded generally to certain Philippine class fractions and their economic programmes. "Conservatives" found support among the traditional oligarchy, with calls for elite control over an economy still favouring traditional commodity exports. "Liberals", on the other hand could be counted among the "new" business and industrial bourgeoisie and their upper middle-class executive and professional supporters. Their political programme largely ran parallel with plans for increased economic liberalisation and industrial investment. One way of achieving these economic reforms would be through the encouragement of international capital and the integration or cooptation of certain sectors of the workforce, where necessary through concessions to political reform.

"Radicals" were to be found scattered among certain fractions of the urban working classes, organised rural labour, and their middle-class supporters amongst the intelligentsia and public service sectors. They

demanded social justice, grassroots democracy, and a more equitable distribution of economic wealth through substantive reforms. They were seriously critical of the capitalism practiced in the Philippines.

A considerable number of NGOs and cause-oriented people's organisations (POs) were developing in the early 1980s, with political, religious and social affiliations in the wider community. They became committed in varying degrees to the democratisation of certain informal and formal political processes, by publicly challenging elite privileges and abuses, and the secrecy and corruption that surrounded them. A number of these organisations had developed radical political programmes.

The "mosquito" press represented the strategies of the more radicalised political groupings, with their agendas of economic, social and political change. Their periodicals will be differentiated here from those of the traditional electoralist opposition, whose major preoccupation was the ousting of Marcos and the re-establishment of a regime more amenable to their political and economic interests. The "mosquito" alternative press was the voice of the pro-reform lower middle classes. These included members of those social, labour, and cause-oriented groups claiming to speak for those marginalised and impoverished by Marcos's rule. The "opposition" press supported by business groups spoke more for upper middle class fractions who saw Marcos and his cronies as an impediment to their own ascendancy under agendas of "modernisation" and "economic liberalisation".

Taken as a whole, the Philippine media, rather than being exclusively pro- or re-active, can more accurately be described as *inter*-active with political processes and events. Thus although individual periodicals showed definite political courage in voicing criticism of Marcos, it was only because certain parallel economic and political factors were propitious that this courage bore fruit in increasing the momentum of articulated opposition.

Under different economic or political circumstances the outcome of such media courage might have been to help precipitate the return to more authoritarianism. Some of the factors contributing to the political turmoil after 1983 were not, after all, dissimilar to those in the early 1970s which had heralded the imposition of Martial Law. These included the critical stance of certain newspapers to the regime. In 1972 these had been summarily shut down. Why did this not happen in the early 1980s?

There *were* vigorous attempts by the Marcos regime to reverse the processes of liberalisation, as witnessed by the heavy-handedness with which the critical press was sporadically treated. That these reversals did not gain ascendancy, however - as the forces of opposition eventually did - was not only a product of the individual acts of defiance by certain newspaper proprietors and journalists. It was, more importantly, the outcome of an *accumulation* of structural pressures at national and international levels, both among elite actors and among mobilising popular forces. These created a political momentum which the crumbling regime was unable to resist.

Critical voices may well be important at all times, as a check on the probity of the powerful. Yet it is important to take note of the economic and political conditions within which those voices are operating, in order to explain the actual political outcomes of such criticism. Only then is it possible to assess and understand the media's contribution to potential democratic change. It could be argued, for example, that a critical voice had persisted even after the imposition of Martial Law up until the mid-70s, in the form of small church and community newsletters. *Signs of the Times*, *Ang Bandilyo*, and *The Communicator*, distributed by various progressive arms of the Catholic church, had all experienced closure orders between 1974 and 1976 for criticising the regime (Soriano, 1981: 18; Pineda-Ofreneo, 1986: 142). *Ang Bandilyo* survived; it continued to appear weekly "without fail" over the next 11 years, and to remain a thorn in the flesh of corrupt local officialdom in Mindanao (Dionisio, 1986: 7).

However, these were all comparatively small, local ventures. To be sure, they were useful in community networking and in maintaining, against the odds, some local accountability, but their impact at national level must be adjudged minor. This was chiefly because, working at the periphery, they remained largely isolated throughout the early period of Martial Law. Networking at the margins is possible, but is made more difficult by the sparseness of established conduits through which information can flow, and the sheer technical, and often physical, obstacles. How to ensure that marginalised voices are heard at the centre has been one of the major problems addressed by Philippine information networks and alternative news agencies, as we shall see in a subsequent chapter.

It was the news-sheets and periodicals with a Manila base which came to act as conduits for activist voices throughout the country during the liberalisation period, and to push at the boundaries of what was politically permissible in the struggle to articulate critical agendas. It was in Manila, as we have seen, that political activism was concentrated, partly because of the capital's overwhelming concentration of informational and organisational resources, but also because the activist elements of the middle classes - the "political classes" - were also, in demographic terms, disproportionately represented there. It was, moreover, in Manila where the centre of political elite power lay. This applied not only to the operational centres of the regime, with the metropolitan locations of the executive, legislative and coercive branches of the state, but also to the operational sites of those elites opposing it - the old oligarchs, the modernising business elites, and the branch headquarters of international capital.

It therefore becomes clear why the alternative press operated from, and built its greatest reader circulation in, Metro Manila and the surrounding areas of Central Luzon, even though the abuses it reported were distributed throughout the archipelago. Indeed in many cases it had been the initial isolation of the communities suffering these abuses which had made them so vulnerable. Two of the salient roles of the critical press - its "watchdog" and "networking" functions - combined to draw these abuses to the attention of those nearer the centre of power.

As proof of the nuisance value of the alternative press, a number of their articles were to provoke the regime into serious retaliation during the period of liberalisation, despite their periodicals' relatively modest distribution. The "mosquito" press had in fact existed from about 1977 as small newsheets circulated on university, college and school campuses. The initial audience of "mosquito" periodicals was therefore small in number, and consisted in the main of mildly dissenting students and intellectuals. Titles included the CPP's own newsletters, *Liberation* and *Ang Bayan*, circulated clandestinely; and the then legally permitted *We Forum*.

Hans Menzi's little weekly, *Who*, had begun life as an apolitical variety magazine, also aimed at a student readership, and largely staffed by ex-students. It was published openly from the outset, unlike its more revolutionary counterparts. Yet it was, perhaps, the combination of a potentially activist readership and young journalists out to prove their mettle, which politicised the magazine and rapidly gained it a reputation for left-of-centre politics (National Press Club, 1985: 30). In June 1980 *Who* published two long investigative features on the murder by the military of the tribal activist, Chief Macli-ing Dulag, in Kalinga, a relatively remote mountain region of North Luzon. The Kalinga tribe had been resisting for several years, with church and NPA guerrilla assistance, the government's ill-advised attempts to build four mammoth dams across their territory, the so-called Chico Dam project. The chief's murder merely stiffened the Kalingas' resistance, and Macli-ing Dulag became something of a folk hero for the Philippine left in consequence of the media publicity. According to a later National Press Club assessment, the reports in *Who* represented:

a breakthrough in Philippine journalism under martial law; they [were] the first journalistic pieces [...] which [dealt] with militarization and the terror it brings to those who live in its midst - and those who write about it.

National Press Club, 1985: 1.

The two journalists, Ma.Ceres Doyo and Rene Villanueva, both young women at the start of their careers, were summoned separately to military hearings. The first interrogation, of Doyo, generated wide publicity because it was open to the media. The second was held in secret on the pretext of "national security implications", but it was too late by then for the authorities to contain the adverse publicity.

Doyo was able to counter her interrogator's exhortation to present the "government's side of the story" with a staunch defence:

I did not come [to Kalinga] as an agent of government. [...] I came to print the side of the people. [...] The government has all the access [to media] to give its side [...but] the people have not been heard. [...] My article is a challenge to the government to print the truth.

cited in *ibid.*: 2

A role for journalism under a repressive regime had been re-established: that of advocacy, of "voicing out" the interests of struggling minorities (who collectively under Marcos could be said to have constituted the "repressed majority").

This particular "breakthrough" of investigative journalism was first broached in the "minority-interest" magazine *Who* (21 June 1980). The two articles became the "trail-blazer" for a follow-up story in the mass-circulation *Panorama* a week later (29 June 1980). It is possible to argue, therefore, that the Doyo and Villanueva articles were used to test the reception of the stories in a "sheltered" minority weekly, before according them fuller publicity. The role of trail-blazer for the mainstream press was to be repeated by other alternative periodicals throughout the liberalisation period. In a later issue of *Panorama* Letty Magsanoc defended all three articles which had appeared in *Who* and *Panorama*. She explained that she was responding to what she felt to be an implicit official governmental criticism of them, that "a journalist becomes irresponsible because his view is divergent from that of the authorities and, because he dissents, he is automatically a [Communist] subversive" (National Press Club, 1985: 20).

In her reply she herself implicitly criticised both the official "developmental model" of journalism, and also those media personnel who had succumbed to the corrupting comforts of working either for the crony press or in government service at the Malacanang press office. She went on to pose the question:

[...] why should [the press] be expected to be a tool of government, a propagandist [...] for its goals and programs? The journalist might as well join the Presidential Press Staff. He has no business being in media.

ibid.: 21.

6.10. The Philippine Press and Corruption

Magsanoc was doubtless alluding to what has elsewhere been described as the "journalistic prostitution" of the Martial Law era (Pineda-Ofreneo, 1986: 143). "Sweeteners" were by this time rife in the mainstream crony press, offered to journalists by those seeking to divert, pervert, or otherwise influence their published record of the "facts". These sweeteners included: free passes; wining and dining; "envelopes" containing money (distributed at a particular event, in an attempt to secure a favourable media report)¹⁹; monthly retainers, stocks, cash and bonds; jobs for relatives; avoidance of customs duties; air travel; and commissions to write promotional money-spinners (*ibid.*).

Whilst some of these inducements might pass as trivial, a White Paper published in 1977 by a Special Committee on Ethics set up by the Philippine Council for Print Media also castigated the more serious offences of extortion and blackmail by journalists. These, it was claimed, were being regularly perpetrated by certain newsmen in the mainstream press as "compensation" for "toning down" or

"sprucing up" critical or flattering reports about those concerned with their "public image"²⁰ (*ibid.*). Yet it was widely known that Marcos was himself notoriously generous to those newsmen who presented him flatteringly; and the Malcanang press corps had swollen considerably during his presidency.

It might be argued that certain of these practices (such as free passes) might not necessarily be frowned upon, in the West or elsewhere. Other practices (such as duty-free smuggling) tend to exist in a general framework of corruption - condoned, barely tolerated, or otherwise reluctantly discounted (Theobald, 1990). Yet there is no doubt that the political atmosphere of secrecy, unaccountability and - to use a more recent epithet - "sleaze", all of which had grown considerably during the Marcos years, had been highly conducive to falling ethical standards in the media professions generally. It may be sufficient to note here that corruption in the Philippines has been, and remains, pervasive, and reaches into those institutions, like the media and judiciary, which are supposedly charged with reporting it.

In this atmosphere of growing mistrust, in the regime and its collaborators in the mainstream media (Dresang, 1985: 38-39), the first investigative reports published in *Who* and *Panorama* doubtless came as a breath of fresh air. Yet after the Aquino assassination it was not *Who* but the "mosquito" small presses - those "alternatives" truly free of any taint of crony collaboration - which were to attract a public hungry for "independent" news and comment on the nation's turbulent affairs (see Table 4).

Table 4. Oppositional Media Ownership, 1978-1986: "Mosquito"/ Alternative and Opposition Presses

<i>Newspaper</i>	<i>/ Date /Status*</i>	<i>Radio</i>	<i>Founder/ Publisher</i>
Ang Bayan	/ 1970 / A		CPP
Liberation	/ 1970 / A		CPP
Who	/ 1978 / O		Hans Menzi
We Forum	/ 1978 / A		Jose Burgos
Malaya	/ 1981 / A		Jose Burgos
The Guardian	/ 1983 / A		Marcelo Soriano
Filipino Times	/ 1982 / A		Elizalde Diaz
Masa	/ 1983 / A		Jose Burgos
Manila Paper	/ 1983 / A		Reuben Canoy
Mr. & Ms. Special Edition	/ 1983 / O		Eugenia Apostol
Veritas	/ 1983 / O		Bishops-Businessmen's Conference, including Jaime Ongpin
Manila Hotline	/ 1984 / O		Oswaldo Carbonell
Kalayaan	/ 1984 / O		Jose & Ricardo Papa
	/ O	Radio Veritas	Bishops' Conference

* A = "Alternative" ("Mosquito") Press;

* O = "Opposition" Press or Radio

(* See main text for full explanation)

Source: Yapo, 1985: 48

The first wave of "mosquito" periodicals had been led by Jo Burgos, the publisher first of *We Forum*, then *Malaya*. Although *We Forum* had been forced to close (see below), Burgos had recovered his readership by bringing out its sister Tagalog-Pilipino periodical, *Malaya* (meaning "Freedom" in Tagalog), in an English edition from January 1983 onwards. It was joined later by a Tagalog counterpart, *Masa*. Other "alternatives" prior to the Aquino assassination included *The Guardian*, *Filipino Times* and *The Manila Paper*, in English²¹; after the event, four "opposition" titles appeared: *Veritas*, *Mr. & Ms. Special Supplement*, *Kalayaan*, and *Philippine Signs*. The financial newspaper, *Business Day*, rapidly earned itself the reputation of "the most reputable business paper in town" (Maramba, 1986: 9); it too published reports critical of the Marcos regime.

Between them these publications provided a forum for a variety of different voices in terms of class representation. Whereas the "opposition" newspapers like *Veritas* and *Business Day* could be said to represent the "liberal centre" and "centre right" opposition within the church and business community, "mosquito" alternative periodicals like *Malaya*, *Masa*, and *The Manila Paper* published *inter alia* the views of prominent underground Marxist "natdems", and the non-Marxist "socdems" and liberal left.

Some typical headlines in the "alternative" press at the time of the Aquino murder included: "Marcos should resign" (*The Manila Paper*, 12-18 September 1983); "FM [Ferdinand Marcos] expected to step down?" (*Philippine Times*, 19-25 September 1983); and "US Wants Marcos Out" (*Filipino Times*, 4-10 November 1983). Needless to say, the full articles following the eye-catching headlines generally betrayed the latter as wishful rhetoric; but the mere fact that editors now dared to publish direct calls of this kind indicates how much the climate had changed after the assassination.

Many headlines alluded to the assassination itself, others spelt out dire international economic and political consequences, whilst yet others used the events as a pretext to point up regime failures: "Murder of Aquino may fuse revolution" (*The Manila Paper*, 12-18 September 1983); "Army plotted Aquino murder" and "Businessmen fear economic collapse" (*Philippine Times*, 26 September 1983); "Aquino's Slay Awakens Labour" (*Filipino Times*, 21 October 1983); and later, drawing heavily on the Aquino cachet, "It's what my father would be doing if he were alive - [Daughter] Kris Aquino on [Oppositional] Street Rallies" (*Veritas*, 12-18 February 1984).

The escalating war in the countryside was now openly referred to. *The Manila Paper* started publishing a weekly tally of those killed in military conflicts, under the front-page rubric "Filipinos at War" - a "body count based on published reports only", which already came to 844 for the four months from May to September 1983 (*The Manila Paper*, 12-18 September 1983). An issue of the *Filipino Times* described the flight of capital from Manila "via the black market [which] goes on relentlessly at a calculated rate of \$5 million a day" (*Filipino Times*, 4 November 1983).

The Philippine public also turned for critical information to reports from the West, smuggled into the country covertly via fax machines and photocopied in what quickly became known as the "xerox press". Ironically, as Gonzalez points out, the colonial connection was in part responsible for the readership among Philippine elites of "certain [US] transnational media", whose "coverage of the violence and fraud committed by the Marcos regime [...] helped focus international pressure on its eroding legitimacy" (Gonzalez, 1988: 37). Although Gonzalez makes the point in connection with the 1986 "Snap Election", the Philippine people's general disaffection with their regime was reported steadily by the international press after 1983.

One popular article on Marcos's hidden millions outlined the Marcos family's large real estate holdings in the US. It first appeared in the *San Jose Mercury News*, published in the San Francisco conurbation on the US West Coast where many exiled Filipinos holed up during Martial Law. The article rapidly gained wide circulation in the Philippines through copies xeroxed in Manila and subsequently reprinted in the alternative and opposition presses - which were themselves xeroxed to increase distribution (Bautista, 1986: 27).

These print articles were supplemented by "Betamax" videotape recordings copied from Western and locally-produced documentaries which provided some of the background facts to the assassination. Japanese documentaries gave accounts of the events themselves; these had not been available to local Philippine audiences at the time because of the broadcasting news blackout. Later, clandestine "Betamax" copies were circulated of the local production *"Eleven Days in August"*, with footage of the funeral mass and cortege, and interviews with the bereaved Aquino family (Dionisio, 1986: 8). Both "Betamax" and "xerox" media copied items from the US national news relating to developments in the Philippines. Meanwhile, audio cassette recordings and sound-slide presentations circulated, documenting military atrocities. One such presentation on the Negros sugar workers' struggle for human rights and social justice was produced by a Columban priest in the province (Abril, 1986: 3). Collectively these "group" or "micro" media²² were also raising the consciousness of hitherto apathetic urban classes as to the appalling conditions prevailing throughout the country.

6.11. "Mosquito" Presses. Case Study: We Forum; Malaya; Mr. & Ms.

These alternative sources of information found their way into anti-Marcos periodicals to feed the public's "hunger" for "hard news" about the fluid political situation. Their news hunger in turn fed the circulation figures and economic success of the "mosquito" press. This circle of economic and political supply and demand, and the "high-risk ventures" it entailed, is exemplified by three periodicals which I examine in this section. The "urge for democracy" became during this period a saleable commodity, creating an anomalous situation in which small, economically and politically vulnerable, media outlets - which in

more normal circumstances might have had very little chance of survival - were able to consolidate their market position and thrive.

We Forum was started in 1977 in fortnightly tabloid form by Jo Burgos and was, as mentioned, initially addressed to college students. Burgos himself was a veteran investigative reporter of the pre-Martial Law era who "saw the need for an independent newspaper in the atmosphere of control and suppression of information" (Soriano, 1981: 14). At the lifting of Martial Law in 1981, demand for *We Forum* had spread to the general public, and Burgos began to publish three issues weekly. By then the magazine had even excited attention among academics in the region, as an article in the *Asian Messenger*, the journal of the Hong Kong Centre for Communication Studies, made clear. Entitled "Bold Little Weekly", the article praised the periodical for "often print[ing] stories not found in other Filipino dailies" and for being "a popular source for news of anti-martial law activities and as an outlet for the non-Communist opposition to government policy" (*Asian Messenger*, vol 5/1, Winter 1980: 17).

The article noted that Burgos had expressed surprise that the government still allowed its publication, surmising that they were using it as a propaganda "showcase of democracy in the Philippines" (*ibid.*). Burgos at that time was very much a one-man band, editing, laying out, and distributing *We Forum* by hand himself; his columnists offered their services free (Burgos: O/I).

The magazine's stories, Burgos recalled, already included exposes:

[...] for instance on the private wealth of army generals, or on the nepotism surrounding a Supreme Court appointment - Justice Herrera resigned later as a consequence. That was the point that people started noticing We Forum, because all the other newspapers started publishing follow-up stories. But I'd already been getting threats, clandestine military surveillance on myself and our printing press.

Burgos: O/I.

These unwanted attentions came to a head in 1982 when *We Forum* achieved overnight notoriety by publishing a series of articles by Bonifacio Gillego, a respected military man in exile in the US, who claimed with detailed evidence, including names, places and dates, that the war medals Marcos had boasted of winning in World War Two fighting the Japanese were in fact fake ("The Other Version of FM's War Exploits", *We Forum*, August 1982).

The article had broken the most sacred taboo of Philippine journalism in the early '80s: personal criticism of Marcos. Burgos recounted the aftermath to me:

Marcos came out publicly at a meeting of war veterans over the "fake medals" article and said that We Forum had "questioned his heroism", and that he would ask the publisher, me, to eat his own newspaper. So that was a direct threat. But I immediately published a riposte to that in my column in the newspaper.

Burgos: O I.

This resulted on 7 December in Burgos being jailed with 13 of his staff members and columnists for a week, and being kept under house arrest, technically, for the following two years. A libel suit for P4 million (approximately \$200,000) and a subversion case (maximum penalty: death) were filed against him, and the printing plant, equipment and three new vehicles were sequestered. Burgos takes up his story again:

One thing I've never understood, even now, is why the crony papers came out with the story, publicising it in effect. I think giving me publicity was a bad tactical error on Marcos's part. Because people questioned it, it was in full headlines, and for the first time there was a massive demonstration at Camp Crame [where Burgos and his staff were incarcerated], joined by newspaper people and religious organisations and led by Nick Joaquin, one of our top literary figures, in support of We Forum and press freedom. And there was also pressure from the international press urging Marcos to release us.

Burgos: O/I.

The *We Forum* office was guarded by the military, and to have continued publishing would have been in contempt of court with regard to the pending libel case. Nothing daunted, Burgos converted his other title, the Pilipino-language *Malaya*, into a predominantly English-language weekly. It was "clean" of the charges being brought against *We Forum*, so the transfer was quite legal. Burgos pawned some of his wife's jewelry to use as capital. He recalled, "Even Ninoy Aquino sent word from the US, saying I was committing suicide, putting out another paper. But I said, I'm a journalist, that's all I know!" (Burgos: O/I). Together with *Mr. & Ms.*, *Malaya* was in August 1983 in a strong position to capitalise on the dearth of "hard" information about the Aquino murder. Burgos was able to build up his periodical's circulation figures, its frequency and regularity, and indeed its appearance, to that of a daily broadsheet - as an "alternative newspaper of record" (Burgos: O/I).

There was a wholesale desertion of the reading public to the opposition and alternative presses, both of which grew massively at the expense of the crony press. Coming from a circulation of 10,000 in January 1983, *Malaya* had captured a 90,000 share of the Manila readership on the day after the Aquino assassination nine months later, simply because it was one of the few media outlets in the whole of Manila that published a report of what, by any standards, was a momentous event.

With this success behind it, *Malaya* became a daily in 1984. By the time of the Snap Election and EDSA in February 1986, *Malaya* had reached peaks of between 240,000 and 300,000, whereas the largest crony newspaper, Menzi's *Bulletin Today*, had dropped from 60% of market share in 1983 and 42% in 1984, to an all-time low of 25% and a circulation of around 200,000 at EDSA (Bodegon, 1986: 29; Pineda-Ofreneo, 1986: 167; Burgos: O/I).

This still left room for other "alternatives" to corner the market in Aquino memorabilia, which the Marcos crony press were constrained from publishing. They initially tapped into the collective outpourings of rage and grief, nostalgia and sentimentalisation, which now surrounded the assassinated senator. Immediately after the airport murder there appeared a rash of news-sheets either totally or substantially devoted to the deceased Senator Aquino, his life, family - even, as Eugenia ("Eggy") Apostol, proprietor of *Mr. and Ms.*²³, told me jokingly, the family dog (Apostol: O/I).

Mr. & Ms. had an entirely different evolution from *Malaya*. Under Martial Law, Eggy Apostol, herself a former editor, decided in 1976 that the "safest - probably the only - magazine we could bring out was a woman's magazine" (*ibid.*). But in 1981 she

[...] decided to take [Marcos] at his word, and see what the limits to his new so-called "freedom of the press" amounted to. He was vaunting it nationally and internationally, so we thought we'll just test it. It was a challenge.

ibid.

She invited columnists who had had a good reputation before the Martial Law era to join her. Her backers, interestingly, included Mrs Christina Ponce Enrile, wife of the arch-crony Juan Ponce Enrile, Marcos's Defence Minister, who had joint control, alongside fellow-crony Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco, of the huge coconut industry. Consequently, Enrile had vast crony wealth and ambitions to match - as his central role in EDSA was to prove.

Apostol told me that she and her husband had at that time been "quite sticky" with the Enriles socially: "She was a good friend of mine; she owned 20% [of the *Mr. & Ms.* press]. Mrs Enrile was quite anti-Imelda [Marcos]. She had total confidence in me; she never told me what to print" (*ibid.*). After the Aquino assassination, because "the coverage was so bad", Apostol started to bring out a weekly called *Mr. & Ms. Special Edition*. Letty Magsanoc, who had been out of work for two years after being fired from *Panorama* and the *Bulletin* by Menzi, became the new editor.

Mr. & Ms. remained safe with all its advertising, and the Special came out as a tabloid, in black-and-white, with no advertising. [...] The circulation shot up. We had to print the "[Aquino] funeral edition" twice. The circulation rose to 500,000 at its peak, which was phenomenal for a weekly. That was on street sales alone - it made Philippine publishing history!

ibid.

Letty Magsanoc told me that *Malaya* was not seen as a rival:

We were glad to have company! We didn't have the same format - they were a newspaper; we were a magazine. We had lots of pictorials, photos, because there were practically daily demonstrations against Marcos at that time. Our coverage was mainly political: anti-Marcos and pro-democracy. To begin with it was mainly just about Ninoy [...]. Because at that time there

wasn't much known about him. He'd spent quite a lot of time abroad [in the US], so there was a lot of hunger to know about the man. Readers just couldn't get enough.

Magsanoc: O I.

The broad Philippine public saw Ninoy Aquino as a folk-hero and Christian martyr. Ileto notes that, from being a "whiz kid of the old politics", Ninoy Aquino was transformed through his martyrdom into a symbol of "alternative [and] meaningful politics". "The old suspicion that somehow a politician's fine words [were] not matched by sincerity and action, [had] melted in Ninoy's case" (Ileto, 1985: 10-15). There was a sudden and dangerous amnesia about exactly what Ninoy Aquino had represented in terms of the Philippine class structure: the traditional interests of the landed oligarchs. As a class they had always been happy to collaborate, as *compradors* and commodity exporters, with those sectors of international capital which would best promote or at least condone their narrow class project of plundering the nation for quick profit - exactly as the Marcos cronies who had replaced them were now doing.

Ninoy Aquino's political project, judging from his previous record, had been little different. In the wake of his assassination, however, many oligarchs and their "trapo" political representatives found it expedient to endorse the portrayal in the opposition media of the near-canonised Ninoy as a "fighter for democracy" - just like them.

6.12. Opposition Media. Case Study: Veritas and Radio Veritas

The relationship of the Catholic church to the Marcos regime had grown more critical over time. This section looks at how this major Philippine institution employed various media channels to voice its increasing opposition to government policies, including militarisation and human rights abuses.

There was a growing perception in the early 1980s, even among the conservative church hierarchy, that the church needed its own media outlets to defend the church's position vis-a-vis the regime. As mentioned above, the church had first crossed swords with the regime in the mid-1970s when its local newsbulletins and newsletters, *Signs of the Times*, *The Communicator*, and *Ang Bandilyo* (The Announcer) were closed down for alleged subversion.

The charges were later dropped by the military, and the outspoken *Ang Bandilyo* began republishing in Mindanao; a replacement for *Signs of the Times* emerged with *Ichthys*. Meanwhile two Catholic-owned radio stations, *DXBB* and *DXCD*, were closed for allegedly broadcasting "coded messages" to NPA rebels (Soriano, 1981: 18; Youngblood, 1981: 721-22). As Youngblood observes, these attempts at intimidation were only partially successful, since a number of critical church publications, some with an ecumenical or Protestant orientation, continued to be published.

What is significant about the launch of *Veritas* after the Aquino murder is that, in this very religious country²⁴, the business community felt an alliance with the Catholic church would best further its own interests, and to that end was prepared to fund a separate popular weekly periodical with a religious orientation (de Jesus: O/I). Jaime Ongpin, executive director of the important mining company, Benguet Corporation, whose brother, Roberto, was a Marcos cabinet minister, became an increasingly vocal critic of Marcos (Wurfel, 1988: 278). He set up *Veritas* weekly news magazine with business and church backing (*ibid.*: 280), and alleged US financial support (de Jesus: O/I). The name *Veritas* was doubtless chosen as a "tie-in" with *Radio Veritas*, which however remained a separate media organ, under the direct jurisdiction and management of the Catholic bishops (Murphy, 1986: 21).

No newspaper could match the immediacy of radio: the problem for the opposition had always been that most stations were securely in crony hands. *Radio Veritas* was a station that until 1983 had been "as docile as other radio and TV stations" (*ibid.*), but had then distinguished itself by being the only local Philippine station to broadcast a live report of Aquino's funeral²⁵:

The station's coverage was purposely low key, sedate and apolitical. Yet the event itself was so politically charged that the station emerged as a leading anti-Marcos institution.

ibid.

This sobriety and "non-partisanship" continued through into the beginning of the presidential "Snap Election" campaign in late 1985, and lent the station's voice that important media virtue, "credibility". It was this credibility, added to the church's undisputed strength as moral arbiter in the Philippines, which gave weight to *Radio Veritas*'s reports in February 1986 at the time of the "Snap Election" and, subsequently, at EDSA.

Cardinal Sin then came decisively off the fence and issued a series of most avowedly partisan pronouncements in the run up to, and aftermath of, polling day. These included his famous "call to arms" at EDSA. Firstly, Sin and the Philippine Catholic Bishops' Conference (PCBC) issued a moral judgement against the fraudulent elections in an open Pastoral Letter to Marcos himself. Then when the "showdown" came, the church gave unambiguous support to the RAM military rebels, led by Defence Minister Enrile and Lt.General Fidel Ramos, whose avowed aim was the overthrow of the Marcos regime.

6.13. *The "Snap Election" and the "EDSA Revolt" 1986*

By 1985 US State Department advisers close to Reagan had begun to wonder openly if Marcos was not losing control. Their chief worry was that, in feeding the ever-growing communist insurgency, the

economic, political and social abuses of the Marcos regime were creating the conditions for another Vietnam-style civil war in one of their key military base locations in Asia.

It was apposite, therefore, that Marcos chose to announce his call for a "Snap Election", to be held within three months, on a US television chat show in November 1985. This was a clear attempt to assuage his US and other international critics (Bonner, 1987: 385 ff.). He presumably hoped thereby to wrong-foot an unprepared domestic opposition. But he had reckoned without the liaising electoral networks already in place. One of the most important had Manila's prelate, Cardinal Sin, at its centre; he was to prove a key figure in uniting the mainstream opposition. He first cobbled together an uneasy agreement between Cory Aquino, under the liberal banner of LABAN²⁶, and the conservative leader of UNIDO²⁷, Salvador Laurel. This ensured that the major electoral oppositional forces would not be split. Sin then went on to have the Aquino-Laurel ticket endorsed in church pulpits throughout the country - probably the most effective rural electioneering of the campaign.

Yet Marcos's snap announcement *did* wrong-foot the radical NDF and its allies. Those who had been banking on an escalation of the protest movement, through the "Parliament of the Streets", radical networking and conflictual politics, decided to boycott the elections. They claimed that in the light of past evidence Marcos could be expected to cheat massively: to participate would merely endorse a bankrupt and fraudulent system, from which grassroots democratic voices would be excluded. Subsequent events were to prove this prognostication correct in most essential details. Yet the boycott seems with hindsight to have been a singular tactical error. It left the "natdems" not only excluded from the electoral race itself, but also, more importantly, without any direct political leverage when Aquino's government came to be formed after EDSA.

However the social democrats, or "socdems", together with the Christian democrats and "libdems", agreed to endorse the Aquino-Laurel ticket, some with greater reservations than others. There was an illusion of unity among the very disparate oppositional factions backing the LABAN-UNIDO presidential ticket. Though this new-found "harmony" was not to last, the immediate beneficiaries of this spurious "unity" were the forces of the old oligarchy: the "trapos", landowners, and the Manila bourgeoisie. As Hamilton perceptively notes:

The downfall of the Marcos regime was a product, as much as anything else, of the disaffection of major segments of the business class whose interests were being seriously harmed by the economic decline brought on by government mismanagement. But the bourgeois revolution of 1986 was directed much more against the close associates of the former President [Marcos] than at the old oligarchy itself.

Hamilton, 1987: 1245-6.

The events leading directly to the EDSA revolt of February 1986 have been well rehearsed (see, for example, Bello, 1986a; Beltran, 1986; Bodegon, 1986; Bonner, 1987; Davis, 1987; Gonzales, 1988;

Goodno, 1991; Murphy, 1986; Timberman, 1991). The immediate impetus for EDSA was without doubt the military revolt led by the dissident officers of the Reform the Armed Forces Movement (RAM) under Juan Ponce Enrile and Fidel Ramos. These rebel leaders had already secured preliminary support not only from some of their key military comrades-in-arms but also from major civilian actors, including Cardinal Sin. Once the rebellion was under way Enrile and Ramos also made their plans known to key US state actors via the US Ambassador, Steven Bosworth (Bonner, 1987: 435-6).

Cardinal Sin played a major role in publicising the rebels' cause to the world at large, and above all to urban Filipinos. It was Sin who used *Radio Veritas* to rally support for the revolt in Manila. Significantly he appealed not just to church-workers - including a "frontline" of praying nuns. More importantly, Manila's citizenry flocked in their tens, then hundreds, of thousands in response to his call to defend the RAM rebels at the military GHQ of Camps Crame and Aguinaldo on EDSA. This mass response became the enduring image of EDSA's "people power" which local and international media fixed in the popular iconography. Yet in spite of the salience of *Radio Veritas*'s role in the immediate circumstances of the revolt, it was the spade-work performed by church and community activists, and political workers on the left, many of them radicalised by opposition to Marcos out in the rural and urban *barangays*, which had created the political environment in which Cardinal Sin's call to action was heeded.

Timberman (1991) considers, on the one hand, the church, the military RAM plotters led by Enrile and Ramos, and the "moderate" opposition, each with its rival claim to have instigated the EDSA revolt; on the other, the radical left's claim to have led the anti-Marcos struggle in the months, even years, prior to EDSA (Timberman 1991: 152 ff.). In reviewing these claims he demolishes several potent myths which have arisen about EDSA: that it stood as an example of how the country's problems could be "peacefully solved"; that it "unified the classes"; and that "people power" would herald a new era of popular politics, supplanting the old elite model. He shows these myths to be based on fallacies which have ignored the genuinely revolutionary agendas of the radical left, and the essentially urban, middle-class nature of the EDSA revolt itself (*ibid*: 156).

The re-establishment of oligarch hegemony could not have been accomplished so bloodlessly without the collaboration of significant numbers of the middle class. After EDSA they were able to reestablish their minimal economic and political agendas, including constitutional reforms. Thereafter they became much less concerned with the substantive democratic agendas of their erstwhile political allies among the popular classes, and more with their own economic well-being. Thus although the scale of disaffection with Marcos among the urban and rural poor had been useful to organise popular mobilisations prior to EDSA, the radical agendas to redress the nation's deep economic and social ills became diluted by middle class advocates after 1986. The "socdems", for example, were willing to collaborate, albeit critically, with much of the Aquino regime's post-EDSA agenda.

In short, the ambivalent class interests of many Philippine middle class fractions - to share where possible the spoils of Philippine-style capitalism, but not necessarily with other subaltern classes - made them unreliable long-term class allies in any genuine popular democratic movement. This ambivalence was reflected in the public forum for their class project, namely the liberal press of the post-EDSA era.

6.14. Summary: The Media's Role in Liberalisation

We can now summarise the salient characteristics of the Philippine media in the run-up to EDSA, and make an assessment of its role in the post-Martial Law period of "liberalisation". First, Marcos cronies owned the four major print media groups of the mainstream press, most of the radio, and all of the television stations. In structure and economic scope these organisations replicated patterns of print media ownership before Martial Law. Oligarchic and oligopolistic tendencies, general throughout the Philippine economy, were present in the Philippine mainstream media, which remained supportive of elite interests. Under Marcos, however, the old oligarchy came under attack, to be replaced by an even narrower economic and political base of Marcos "crony" supporters, whose economic enterprises, including their media, were protected by the regime.

Circulation figures for crony newspapers rose prior to 1981 because of the very restricted competition, constrained by the Marcos regime's draconian censorship and licencing laws. By 1981, however, Pineda-Ofreneo asserts:

[...] the Bulletin was the only [crony] paper making a profit at a circulation rate of 300,000. Express and Times Journal [...] could hardly break even. [...] Yet the [crony] print media carried on despite reduced profits - or increased losses - if only to continue exercising the power of the press for their own ends.

Pineda-Ofreneo, 1986: 191.

"Their own ends" included protection of their economic and political interests - a primary reason in the Philippines for media ownership under whatever type of regime. Crony owners had major economic interests in tertiary industries and/or monopoly "rent-seeking" enterprises, and these needed defending (see Table 2b, above).

Even the crony press was "no monolith", however. Hans Menzi, for example, allowed the editors and journalists of both his mainstream and alternative presses greater leeway to criticise the regime and the human rights abuses perpetrated by the military. This may have been because he was more exposed as a "committed" media proprietor than the other media cronies, and therefore more interested in maintaining his readership and circulation figures than they were; it may have also been because of his antipathy to Imelda Marcos and General Ver. Yet, when pressured directly by Marcos he was quite

prepared to fire his "troublesome women" if they became too outspoken. He was not therefore prepared to challenge Marcos directly, as opposition and alternative press proprietors were after 1983. The significant fact remains that the ruling elite under Marcos, tight though it was, betrayed small fissures of dissent. Besides Menzi, another example was the antipathy of the Enriles to the Imelda-Ver political axis, and Mrs Enrile's consequent financial backing of the alternative *Mr. & Ms. Special*. Thus even under quasi-authoritarian conditions (the liberalisation phase of re-democratisation), tensions within the elite may be articulated through media rivalries.

Second, young journalists, many of them women, were prepared from 1980 onwards (even before the lifting of Martial Law) to "test the limits" of regime censorship, in both mainstream crony and alternative presses. This was one (high-risk) way to "earn their professional colours". It invariably invited repercussions however, especially in the early 1980s (1980-83), from the military. These came in the shape of interrogations, libel suits and, in a few cases, "salvaging". Metropolitan journalists generally came from middle-class backgrounds, often with parents who had been in public service or elite professions (O/Is)²⁸. Women journalists frequently had spouses in the liberal professions, which made them less dependent on their work economically in the event of reprisals (O/Is).

Third, the "limits of political tolerance" were being pushed back at a time of crisis in the regime, when both its domestic and international allies were rapidly dwindling. This contrasts with the period leading up to Martial Law, when Marcos retained powerful elite allies at home and abroad. Hence in the 1980s individual journalists could generally find a "new home" among the expanding oppositional and alternative presses, if they were fired from crony publications like *Panorama* and the *Bulletin Today*. Contrast this again with the situation at the beginning of Martial Law, when critical journalists were forced (after release from detention) to leave the profession, or the country, or both. In other words the particular nature of the regime crisis, and the political alliances which formed as a result, created greater opportunities for media criticism, firstly, to be expressed; and, secondly, to be listened to by a receptive public. This was through the *force majeure* of the increasing political strength of the opposition, rather than any enthusiasm for liberalisation on the part of Marcos, his crony collaborators or the military.

Fourth, the financing of anti-Marcos "opposition" media (such as *Business Day*, *Veritas* and *Radio Veritas*) came in the main from the business community and the church, the only sectors which could raise substantial investment. This distinguished them from the alternative "mosquito" presses, which remained largely in the hands of former journalists, with initial capital financed from some of their own savings and that of friends and well-wishers. Although they were more vulnerable to market forces than the mainstream crony press, the "mosquitos" were also more independent of major economic actors (such as advertisers and oppositional elites). Conversely they were far more reliant on subscribers and street-sales to build up circulation, which only "took off" after the Aquino assassination. This last event in effect broke the crony monopoly on print media, because of the huge "hunger for news" from the general

public, which the crony press was politically constrained from satisfying. Television, however, because of the huge start-up costs, still remained in the hands of cronies, and securely pro-Marcos; only a couple of (church and provincial) radio stations broke ranks to become more critical of the regime.

Fifth, it was the middle (and upper-middle) classes who constituted the main readership of Philippine broadsheet newspapers, due to price, language, and cultural and educational constraints. It was also from these classes that the anti-Marcos mobilisations in the main drew their leaders. Between oppositional journalists and political activists there was considerable interaction. However, the anti-Marcos press was equally "no monolith", any more than were the political forces ranged against the dictatorship. There was considerable divergence in the agendas of radical periodicals (like the CPP/NDF's publications, *Ang Bayan* and *Liberation*), the left-liberal press (like *Malaya*, *Mr. & Ms.*, *The Manila Paper*, and *Filipino Times*) and business-backed opposition publications (like *Veritas* and *Business Day*). Though all were united in their opposition to Marcos, it was the left-oriented "mosquito" periodicals like *Malaya* and *Mr. & Ms. Special* which gave prominence in their reporting to organisations like BAYAN, KAAKBAY, and BANDILA²⁹. These organisations' attempts to form broadly-based movements of "popular democracy" - using political mobilisations to pressure government rather than the traditional electoral politics of the "trapos" (Lane, 1990: 12-19) - were sympathetically reported (see, for example, *Mr. & Ms. Special*, 3 May 1985).

6.15. EDSA: Media Symbol, Political Reality

In terms of political mobilisation the loose united front of UNIDO and Cory Aquino's PDP-Laban became a formidable electoral force in the run up to the Snap Election. However, it failed to deliver on its populist reform programmes after the "triumph of EDSA", as we shall see in subsequent chapters.

The oppositional press generally played a role in the "liberalisation" leading up to EDSA as one particular conduit for oppositional politics. It acted as a semi-formal, public network for voices which had hitherto been silenced by Marcos, or ignored by his crony press. As the political opposition grew between 1983 and 1986, the oppositional press could act as "cheer-leader", by articulating publicly, as a matter of record, the vehemence and extent of that opposition, informing and conscientising social groups which might otherwise have remained isolated. In embracing the traditional "watchdog" role of the liberal Western-style press, the Philippine "opposition" and "alternative" presses articulated the general public's growing revulsion with the manifest abuses of the Marcos regime; in their "conduit" role they worked against the passive acceptance of such abuses, by presenting the alternative of popular mobilisation.

Through the early '80's the "mosquito" press conscientised a hitherto apathetic urban middle class to the realities of economic hardship and military terror in the countryside and urban slums. After the murder of Ninoy Aquino it alerted them to the possibilities of civil disobedience against an arbitrary, incompetent and corrupt regime. Yet the general limitations of an elite-dominated media were also demonstrated at EDSA. Sceptical voices (Beltran, 1986; Lane, 1986) have delineated the media's contribution to the unrealistic, quasi-millennial expectations of EDSA, Cory Aquino and "people power", in portraying the political adversaries, Aquino versus Marcos, in the binary oppositions of "good" versus "evil". These dichotomies are typical of media characterisations the world over. The particular Philippine variants are derived, on the one hand, from Hollywood gangster genres popular with Filipino film-goers and *komiks*-readers and, on the other, from the religious Easter *pasyon*³⁰ known to most Philippine church devotees (Beltran, 1986: 20). On this reading then, EDSA itself, with its simplifications and millennial overtones³¹, became more a symbolic media event of "liberation" than any substantive step towards genuine democratisation.

Yet a more positive interpretation of the outcomes of the political mobilisations which led to Marcos's fall is also possible. Many of the popular struggles since 1986 indicate that it was the *political processes* leading up to EDSA which have provided the initial organisational energy for subsequent democratic challenges to elite authority. Once the liberal agenda of replacing Marcos by another figure acceptable to the international (US) and domestic (oligarchic) bourgeoisie was in place, however, truly radical critiques of the Philippine economic and political system as a whole began to fade from the pages of the erstwhile "oppositional", newly "mainstream", press.

As Cory Aquino herself said in a speech at New York University shortly after becoming president in September 1986:

The re-birth of Philippine democracy is undoubtedly the showcase of media power, but, less obviously it is also a demonstration of its limits. Fourteen years of lies in the controlled Philippine press [...] did not dull the [people's] appetite for truth or save the dictatorship from it. Marcos had the [crony] media and the guns, we had the truth. [...] The media do not make or unmake governments, tanks do that, and, more rarely but surely, people do. [...] Without the people's support, [the media] can be shut off with the ease of turning a light switch.

quoted in Media Development, 1986: 26.

Even allowing for the imprecise social categories covered by the rhetorical terms "we" and "people", the point is well made. Some individual - usually minority - media outlets may reflect, "mediate", and even facilitate change; they do not initiate it, either individually or collectively, whatever their own euphoric accounts at the time may tell us to the contrary. They also, rather, tend to reflect the class interests of their owners, advertisers and readers. These have only rarely coincided, in the Philippine case, with those of the majority of ordinary people, who remain marginalised from political decision-

making. The implications for the media's roles in rebuilding and safeguarding democratic institutions; in re-establishing public accountability; and in serving as "conduits" for attempts to "deepen" democratic forms and practices is the subject of the following chapter.

Endnotes to Chapter Six

1. Table 3 is a composite of various sources and should be treated with utmost caution. Manila dailies have been notoriously reluctant to undertake public audits of their circulation figures, preferring to make inflated and unsubstantiated claims to boost their often-precarious advertising revenues.
2. The national press body representing most newspaper practitioners has been, and remains, the National Press Club (NPC), which from 1983 onwards published several documents and accounts of the constraints from which journalists suffered under the Marcos regime. See, for example, NPC, 1983; NPC, 1984; and also: Soriano, 1981.
3. "Salvaging" derives from the Spanish "salvaje", and the Pilipino "salbahe", meaning "savage" or "nasty"; hence to "salvage" someone is to "do something nasty to [i.e. kill] him or her".
4. Timberman notes that the Philippines' current account deficit grew from US\$2 billion to US\$3.2 billion between 1981 and 1982 (Timberman, 1991: 135).
5. Marcos was suffering from lupus erythematosus, a chronic disorder of the immune system, which increasingly affected his kidneys. Although the exact details were a closely guarded Malacanang secret, Marcos's unexplained absences from public life and his occasionally swollen appearance started to feed the Manila rumour mill (Bonner, 1987: 340).
6. They included Jo Burgos, publisher-owner of *We Forum* and *Malaya*; Tony Nieva, active in forming progressive media unions; and a forum of women journalists under the banner of WOMEN (Women Writers in Media Now), with Menzi's "troublesome women" from the *Bulletin*.
7. Crony press journalists were given explicit instructions on how to downplay their reports on Aquino's funeral. They were told, for example, to crop very closely all news photos of the event, in order to minimise the impact of the enormous public turnout (O/Is: Cacho-Olivares; de Jesus).
8. The term "mosquito" press is attributed to Marcos's Information Minister, Gregorio Cendana (Pineda-Ofreneo, 1986: 167; "Conversations with NGO writers", *Midweek*, 10 July 1991).
9. A commission of investigation, appointed by Marcos, found against a handful of top-ranking military officers and implicated the "notorious Marcos henchman" and Chief of Staff, General Fabian Ver, in the assassination conspiracy. Yet Ver was subsequently publicly exculpated by Marcos and reinstated in his post, which caused further public outrage (Bonner, 1987: 346-350, and Timberman, 1990: 126-128).
10. This was the date of Ninoy Aquino's death.
11. Bansang Nagakaisa sa Diwa at Layunin ("A Nation United in Thought and Purpose").

12. The name was an allusion to Gabriela Silang, a Filipina (i.e. woman) general in the 1898 Independence movement against the Spanish colonists.
13. Yellow had also been the colour of the ribbons tied to trees (after the popular American song) to welcome Ninoy Aquino on his fateful return; it was later appropriated by Cory Aquino's LABAN or People's Movement. Cruz claims colour came to signify class allegiance: yellow indicated liberal middle-class support for Cory, whereas red remained the colour of CPP and NPA radicalism, worn by students and workers (Cruz, 1986: 18).
14. The word "trapos" was, and remains, Manila slang for "traditional politicians", that is, in the main, members of *cacique* clans in both Congress and local administration. It has the double connotation, in Spanish and Filipino dialect, of "dirty rags", which indicates in what low popular esteem members of political elites have generally been held.
15. It is worth noting here that whereas the mainstream crony press commanded all the *daily* titles, opposition and "mosquito" presses initially came out on a weekly or fortnightly basis, or even more sporadically. They only built up frequency as their popularity grew through the 1984-6 period.
16. These included Arlene Babst, Sophie Bodegon, Sheila Coronel, Ma.Ceres Doyo, Melinda de Jesus, Jo-Ann Maglipon, Letty Magsanoc, Ninez Cacho-Olivares, Lorna Kalaw-Tirol, Domini Torrevillas-Suarez, and Rene Villanueva.
17. Leading female *Panorama* and *Bulletin* staff "were grilled on everything from their private lives to their political beliefs". Shortly afterwards *Mr. & Ms.* editors Eugenia Apostol and Doris Nuyda "went through a similar ordeal" (National Press Club, 1985: 192-93).
18. This list should also include *Who* which could, however, strictly speaking be counted among the "alternative" periodicals.
19. Filipino journalists, with their love of puns, have christened this practice "envelopmentalism".
20. This gave rise to the practice of "AC-DC" or "Attack, Collect; Defend, Collect", where a journalist writes an unfavourable report followed by a favourable one, and money is extorted on both occasions (Dionisio: O/I).
21. *Filipino Times* had a smaller section, approximately a quarter of the periodical, in Tagalog-Pilipino, as did *Manila Hotline*, published after the assassination.
22. There is considerable confusion in the usage of terms like "mass media", "micro media", and "group media"; context or cited source often decides particular usage. "Micro" or "group media" are generally taken to include small circulation presses, community theatres, wallsheets, news-sheets and tapes and videos with a politically critical viewpoint.
23. She later became proprietor of the *Philippine Daily Inquirer*.
24. Other religious groups operating in the Philippines include an indigenous church, the Iglesia ni Cristo, and Protestant churches, which both largely supported Marcos. The Muslim minority in Mindanao opposed him, notably in the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF).
25. According to the two reporters involved: "[...] we had no equipment, not even a walkie-talkie. We grabbed a public telephone and held onto it for four hours. That began our coverage of the Aquino funeral which brought us public honour for the first time in our lives as a station" (quoted in Murphy, 1986: 21).

26. LABAN means "Fight". It became the popular acronym for Lakas ng Bayan, or People's Party, of Ninoy Aquino. The late senator had already challenged Marcos from jail under its banner in the fraudulent local elections of 1979. LABAN had also won a third of the seats in the equally-flawed 1984 National Assembly elections.

27. UNIDO, the United Nationalist Democratic Organization, had been created in 1980, as an umbrella opposition alliance to pressure Marcos to end Martial Law (Timberman, 1991: 129-30).

28. There are also indirect indicators of the class backgrounds and tastes of many Philippine media practitioners: Menzi's love of opera; Burgos's pawning of his wife's jewelry to finance the expansion of *Malaya*; the Apostols' social "stickiness" with the Enriles. Fathers and spouses of Menzi's "troublesome women" journalists included: an elite lawyer, an ambassador, an exporter and an art dealer.

29. BAYAN, or Bagong Alyansang Makabayan ("New Patriotic Alliance") was the national democratic coalition formed in May 1985; KAAKBAY, or Kilusan sa Kapangyarihan at Karapatan ng Bayan ("Movement for the Power and Rights of the Nation") was a nationalist anti-Marcos organisation led by the human rights lawyer, Jose Diokno; BANDILA was, as already mentioned, a social democratic alliance.

30. The Easter festivities (procession and fiesta) surrounding the enactment of Christ's passion, handed down from Spanish colonial times.

31. A good deal of church-inspired literature analysing the revolt shortly after the event invoked the "hand of God" in the "miracle of EDSA". See, for example, Group Media Journal, 1986: passim; and Media Development. 1986: passim.

7. CHAPTER SEVEN. NEW ACTORS, OLD POLITICS, 1986-93.

7.1. Introduction

Cory Aquino came to the presidency pledged to "restore democracy" after nearly a decade and a half of authoritarian rule. Many ordinary Filipinos pinned high hopes on her new regime: to bring civil peace; to introduce equitable land reform; to strengthen the social and political institutions which would ensure public accountability; and, perhaps above all, to breathe life into the moribund economy and to eradicate the endemic poverty which had actually increased under the Marcos dictatorship¹.

This chapter examines what happened to these hopes during the period of "democratic transition" from 1986 to 1992, and the role which the newly "free" media, and especially the press, played in that transition. Such an examination raises important questions about the nature of "democratisation". What political initiatives did the new regime introduce, what resistances did they encounter, and how did these changes aid or hinder democratisation? What political alignments within the body politic emerged, from elite forces above and from popular forces below, to obstruct or facilitate the deeper democratisation of Philippine institutions, including the media? How can obstructions to democratisation be explained within the trans-regime continuities of the Philippine polity and state? In short: were the hopes of a more equitable, democratic society and polity realised, and if not, why not?

Certain of the major public issues of the period highlight these political tensions. They include: land reform; the struggles over human and civil rights under the new regime; economic policy, foreign debt and structural adjustment; environmental and energy policies; and the future of the US bases. The ways in which the media covered some of these issues will be analysed in more detail in subsequent chapters.

This chapter focusses on the broader political context within which these issues arose, and how they related to democratisation and the performance of the new regime. It also analyses relations between the state, the media, their owners and the new - and old - elites. It examines what changes the press experienced under the new regime and whether these changes produced significant political outcomes. Of particular interest is an analysis of the constraints placed on the media's "watchdog" role - the reporting and critical investigation of the Philippine body politic; and the way new economic and political alliances affected the press's ability to discharge this important function.

7.2. The Post-EDSA Press: an Overview

The advent of a new regime, publicly committed to the promotion of a "free press", encouraged the blossoming of many new print media titles, and an overhaul of media ownership patterns. Abraham (1986) reported six months into the new presidency that:

The remarkable increase from just seven nationwide [English-language] dailies in the heyday of [Martial Law] to twenty newspapers today [in August 1986] - serving a population of 56 million - indicates that press freedom is alive and well.

Abraham, 1986: 10.

The number of daily titles is even more remarkable when one considers that the effective potential readership for the English-language press had never risen much beyond 1.5 to 2 million, even during the heady days of EDSA. In 1993 26 national daily newspapers (11 broadsheets plus 15 tabloids) continued to be published (IBON Facts and Figures, "Press Release", vol.19/11, 15 June 1996).

Several pre-Martial Law newspaper owners relaunched their former titles; the newspapers of Marcos cronies were sequestered² or closed down; their television and radio networks (Channels 2, 9 and 13) were also sequestered; others were returned to previous owners, or run, in the case of Channel Four "People's Television", by the state. Successful pre-EDSA alternative and opposition newspaper titles were able to expand into market niches vacated by the largely discredited crony presses; a handful of them moved to take on the mantle of "new mainstream" in terms of circulation and "newspapers of record". New publication ventures by business interests - some with links to the triumphant anti-Marcos forces, others with as yet unpublicised ties to the discredited Marcos regime itself - were also launched in this volatile economic and political environment.

Small publications with a "social conscience" also proliferated. Many of these had during the Marcos years become part of what is now known collectively as "micro" or "group" media³. They were often allied to cause-oriented, labour, church, health and other community, social and political groups in the Philippines. Some came out from the "underground" into the full light of "legal" existence for the first time; others started up from scratch after EDSA, often with funding from Western NGOs. Increasingly these micro media took on the position of critics of the regime which the alternative presses had largely vacated. A major difference was that their reportages tended to be aimed at sectoral audiences - their own cause-oriented members. Consequently they did not command the same public attention, or the circulation figures, that the "alternatives" had commanded at the height of the pre-EDSA mobilisations to oust Marcos.

7.3. Freedom Reinstated, 1986-87

Cory Aquino was confirmed in the presidency as Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos fled to Hawaii under US protection. Aquino's new cabinet was an uneasy mix of leading supporters from the liberal left and centre and the traditional "trapo" politicians of the conservative right. On the liberal left, Joker Arroyo was an anti-Marcos human rights lawyer, who became Aquino's powerful and outspoken Executive Secretary. He was later to become tainted with the politics of clientelism when he interceded on behalf of William Gatchalian, a business tycoon who had evaded tax and smuggled dutiable plastic resins on a massive scale (de Castro, 1992: 62; *and see also below*). Arroyo was deeply resented by conservatives like vice-president Salvador Laurel who, as head of the coalition UNIDO party, considered himself marginalised from the centre of government. Arroyo was opposed equally by Juan Ponce Enrile, the new Minister of National Defense. It was, of course, Enrile and his RAM-military supporters who had engineered the EDSA coup-revolt; he consequently wanted further liberalisation measures - such as Aquino's election promise to release communist and "natdem" political prisoners - severely curtailed.

The "natdems" had officially boycotted the Aquino election campaign, and were therefore excluded from government. Yet two other left-liberal human rights lawyers, Jose Diokno and "Bobbit" Sanchez, had significant posts as head of the Presidential Commission on Human Rights and Minister of Labour respectively, and as such were expected by the left to give at least some consideration to popular reformist demands.

There were, in addition, those in the cabinet who represented the business fraction of the bourgeoisie. Foremost among these was the new Minister of Finance, Jaime Ongpin, the erstwhile president of the huge Benguet Consolidated Mining Corporation, who had given substantial financial support to Aquino's election campaign, and also backed the Catholic periodical *Veritas*. His "modernising" agendas, though attuned to IMF goals of structural adjustment and economic liberalisation were, not surprisingly, greatly at odds both with traditional oligarchic interests on the one hand and, on the other, with popular demands for swingeing reform of land and labour rights.

7.4. The New 1987 Constitution

Cory Aquino had campaigned in February 1986 on a platform which promised, *inter alia*, the restoration of democratic institutions, reform of land and the economy, and the release of political detainees. Only one month after EDSA she reaffirmed her concern that "what our people wanted first and foremost [was] a true democracy" (cited in Timberman, 1990: 200). However, what she meant by a "true" democracy became clearer as her government proceeded to restore the *status quo ante*.

The new 1987 Constitution, which replaced the discredited 1973 Marcos Constitution, re-established basic human and labour rights (to organise and strike); freedom of the press and of assembly; and a judiciary theoretically independent of the other arms of government. Yet it also reinstated the twin American-style institutions of Congress - the Senate and House of Representatives - which alongside the presidency, before Marcos, had traditionally been the seats of elite governance.

The new Constitution was confirmed by popular referendum on 2 February 1987. Lane (1990) claims that the overwhelming "yes" vote (75%) in the Constitution referendum was "much more a vote against the Right" - who had staged a third abortive pro-Marcos coup attempt just days before the plebiscite⁴ - "than a vote for the constitution" (Lane, 1990: 47). Whether most of the electorate had any accurate idea of the contents of the 62-page document is "extremely unlikely" (*ibid.*). This was not, however, from want of trying on the part of the political and popular left⁵. From June 1986 onwards, the "natdems" had run a vigorous "no" campaign, in conjunction with their own positive alternative constitutional proposals, to promote the interests of the urban and rural poor, and of labour. They had also lobbied the drafters of the Constitution to include provisions for a commitment to comprehensive land reform; the formal institutionalisation of the role of people's organisations in the new political system; and the exclusion of foreign bases from Philippine soil.

These proposals had been published in *Malaya* in July 1986. *Malaya* was now a mass-circulation newspaper, but had remained "independent" of the big proprietors, and pro-left in its editorial stance. Yet most of the other newly reconstituted mainstream media were no more interested in radical alternatives than the crony press had been. This was because the mainstream print and broadcasting media had now been returned in the main to their previous oligarch owners; the handful of newcomers were also pro-business newspapers (see below). The alternative "mosquito" press, which had risen to such prominence in the run-up to the "Snap Election" and EDSA, no longer commanded mass public attention. The "mosquitoes" and their crescendo of criticism against the Marcos regime had been associated with the "crisis years" from 1983 to 1986. As evidenced by the 75% "yes" vote on the new constitution, there was now a conscious longing for normalcy and stability on the part of the middle-class newspaper reading public: they wanted to "believe in Cory", not to be told of her regime's already manifest weaknesses. "Cory", in the post-EDSA euphoria, was still seen by the apolitical majority as "the country's saviour" (Lane, 1990: 48).

The new Constitution tried to anticipate and avoid the political excesses, pitfalls, and institutional and legal manipulations experienced during the Marcos era. There was a deliberate attempt to prevent future presidents assuming dictatorial powers over the head of Congress, as Marcos had done. Presidential authority, particularly with regard to domestic policy and the circumstances under which an emergency could be declared, was severely delimited. The legislature's financial and budgetary jurisdiction, and powers of appointment and veto were expanded. The net effect was to strengthen the congressional

legislature at the expense of the presidential executive - a recipe for political stalemate in future contests between them. Yet beyond the guarantees of legalistic provisions and technical safeguards, including guarantees of a "free press", there were few significant structural changes made to the workings of the Philippine economy and polity.

This is neither to decry nor belittle constitutional guarantees as a necessary basis for a democratic polity. As Miliband (1994b) argued, "constitutionalism [...] is crucial for the protection of basic rights" and the control of power - including "popular power". However there remained the question, in the Philippine case, of whether deeper political democratisation could be achieved without first addressing the basic necessity for "economic democratisation". This would, according to Montes (1989), assume the nature of a fundamental restructuring of the economic forms, and consequently effectiveness, of wealth creation; and a more equitable redistribution of that wealth and concomitant economic resources, including land and the products of labour (Montes, 1989: 63-68).

The Aquino Constitution's guarantees of the basic rights to freedom of assembly and of organisation in any case rapidly became redundant in the exigencies of the "total war" which the regime was soon to declare on communism and, by association, on virtually all legal left organisations. The repercussions of this "drift" away from constitutional rights, where violations of basic human rights were committed with impunity, will be examined below.

Several important provisions did, however, find their way into the new constitution and these were to prove useful points of departure for those attempting to develop democratic forms beyond the *status quo ante*. These included, for example, the requirement that a new treaty be negotiated with the US over their military bases in the Philippines, to be ratified by two-thirds of the Senate. This provision was to become a symbolic battleground for the "natdems" right through to 1992, when the Senate failed, in the last resort, to ratify proposals for the bases negotiated between US and Philippine government representatives. The Philippines thereby gained full legal sovereignty over its entire territory for the first time in its history as a nation. This was the culmination of a long-contested process, with implications as important as those of EDSA itself. The closing of the US bases represented the closing of one chapter of the Philippines' colonial past. It broke symbolically with an implicit dependence in foreign policy and the need to consider US wishes before Philippine popular interests. Even if this were to be its only achievement, in setting the parameters for this historic rupture the Constitution had broken new ground.

7.5. The Congressional Elections, May 1987

In the Congressional elections to the House of Representatives and the Senate in May 1987 there was a landslide for Aquino's PDP-Laban Party. Disappointingly for the popular left, they failed to make any substantial inroads, in spite of a hard-fought campaign and a strong field of intellectually powerful candidates, who supposedly had popular support. Yet given their lack of expertise in, and access to, traditional electoral machinery their failure was perhaps no surprise. The umbrella organisation of left political groupings, the Alliance for New Politics (ANP), backed by many cause-oriented activists, won only two seats to the House of Representatives, with a total 8% of the national poll. The electorate, on an 85% turnout, was either not as ready for change as the left had hoped, or was still enamoured of the promises and euphoria of the previous year's "people power".

Conversely many of the old oligarch families and their "trapo" representatives made a comeback in both the 1987 congressional and the 1988 local elections. The *Philippine Daily Inquirer* reported in 1988 that, of 200 House Representatives, 130 belonged to so-called "traditional political families", with a further 39 related to them; only 31 Congressmen had no electoral record in the pre-Martial Law period (*PDI*, 24 January 1988, cited in Anderson, 1988: 27). This re-establishment extended to the Aquino and Cojuangco clans themselves. Close relatives who had been activists in the Aquino bid for the presidency also remained in politics after 1987. The two most prominent examples were the president's brother, Jose "Peping" Cojuangco and her brother-in-law, Agapito "Butz" Aquino. Taken together these two figures illustrate the ideological distance possible between politicians who both supported, and benefitted from, different aspects of Cory Aquino's presidency.

They both won in the May 1987 Congressional elections, partly as a consequence of being on the "[Cory] Aquino ticket". "Butz" Aquino continued as a left-leaning "socdem" in the Senate, leading the alliance BANDILA. He supported land reform, but his "socdem" forces initially gave "uncritical support" to President Aquino (Lane, 1990: 41). "Peping" Cojuangco, on the other hand, built up the presidential coalition PDP-Laban party as its major power-broker. He subsequently led it into the amalgamated "super party", Lakas (LDP)⁶, along with other centre-right conservatives, in "an alliance of opportunist politicians and regional bosses united, not to advance a common cause, but for access to power and patronage" (Goodno, 1991: 190). He and his party vigorously opposed proposals for substantive agrarian reform.

Opportunism soon came to characterise Philippine politics under the new regime as it had done before Marcos. A major formal difference was that, with Marcos's old party, the Nacionalistas, in near eclipse - along with the demise of his populist political organisation, the KBL⁷ - the old two-party system had fissured into a confusing jumble of new parties. Some of these now jostled to avail themselves of the

state largesse accruing as of right to the ruling coalition alliance (the "pork barrel" of old). Others positioned themselves to profit from media publicity about the corrupt activities of their rivals, which inevitably resurfaced as the old politics returned, and the idealistic rhetoric of EDSA was forgotten. "Trapos" soon settled back into the *quid pro quo* "horse-trading" and other pre-Martial Law routines of Congress; the political will for reform - of the economy, of political institutions, of the military, paramilitary and police forces - was in danger of being bogged down by political inertia.

One minor political surprise was the re-emergence of the old Liberal Party (LP), as apparent moderate progressives. The Liberals had formerly been indistinguishable from the Nacionalistas in their pragmatic support of oligarchic interests. Now, under their venerable leader, Jovito Salonga, they appeared to be adopting a more "principled" reformist stance. They formed a coalition of their own to challenge the supremacy of PDP-Laban, enticing a number of newly-elected Congress members to join them (Timberman, 1990: 271). The 1988 pro-government "opportunist coalition" of PDP-Laban-Lakas, renamed the LDP, was partly a response to this LP challenge. Against the LP's new "moderate reformist" image, however, must be set Salonga's determined push for a senate bill allowing the executive to shut down broadcast media "in times of rebellion" (Sussman, 1990: 42).

Salonga retained his position as Senate leader, and also as head of the Presidential Commission on Good Government (PCGG) which Aquino had set up to examine the finances of state institutions. The degradations of Marcos and his cronies had left them in complete disarray. The PCGG was charged with sequestering and investigating crony enterprises, and attempting to recover "non-performing assets" by privatising them. This naturally soon became a source of power plays and controversy, as old oligarchs, former Marcos cronies, and incipient Aquino cronies, like the president's powerful brother and sister-in-law, squabbled over who should benefit from the potentially lucrative privatisations (Timberman, 1990: 333-5).

Yet the other urgent problems which the country faced in the wake of EDSA were still, a year later, being approached in a tentative, piecemeal fashion. Above all the promise of comprehensive land reform had effectively been shelved by the president herself, awaiting the attentions of a now avowedly pro-landlord Congress.

7.6. *Forgotten Promises: The Land Reform Question, 1987-8*

The Aquino administration's handling of the land question is an illustration of the contradictions and problems faced by the "reconstituted" Philippine polity. The regime's approach to land reform helps to explain why other conflicts and tensions inherited from the Marcos years also subsequently spiralled out of control.

Aquino had promised her rural supporters a comprehensive agrarian reform. Yet once in power she prevaricated. Her own family, the Cojuangcos, owned the second largest *hacienda* in the country, Hacienda Luisita, a massive estate of over 6,000 hectares (*FEER*, 26 March 1987: 73). Both her class and personal interests therefore militated against any whole-hearted commitment to the sweeping land reforms demanded by left and rural activists. These reform proposals were not simply a call for social justice and "land to the tiller". They would also have been an initial step in restructuring the economy away from its dependency on the export of raw commodities and the consequent endemic cycle of unbalanced trade, borrowing, indebtedness and under-investment. This cycle had seriously haunted the economy at least from the time of Magsaysay; the problem had escalated steadily through Macapagal's administration, and exponentially during the Marcos years.

Investment in industrial production, such as it was, remained largely in the hands of foreign capital. This dependency was exacerbated by faulty domestic investment programmes, or total lack of them: earnings from exported agricultural produce - which could have been the basis for domestic industrial investment - were used instead to buy (in addition to essential oil imports) non-essential imported manufactured goods. These patterns were not the basis of a healthy economy: the governments of the NIC "Asian tigers" in Taiwan and South Korea, emulating the original model of post-war Japan, had undertaken far-reaching land reforms prior to their industrial "take-off" (Hamilton, 1987). Conversely many Latin American countries, which remained mired in debt like the Philippines, had retained similar land patterns of huge inequitable *hacienda* holdings and a reactionary landed elite. Land reform would not only have given the rural Filipino more purchasing power with which to buy basic manufactures, producible within the domestic economy; it would also have weaned the bourgeoisie away from an economy so dangerously dependent on a few raw commodities and foreign investors.

Partly to address the oligarchs' intransigence over land reform, the radical peasant union, KMP (Peasant Union of the Philippines), organised in January 1987 a protest rally of farmers to converge from all parts of the country on Mendiola, the boundary bridge leading to the presidential Malacanang Palace. They were shot at by Aquino's presidential guard. Nineteen farmers were killed in what came to be known as the Mendiola Massacre (Putzel, 1992: 221). Some of the main left leaders were eventually jailed on slender pretexts. The KMP farmers' leader, Jaime Tadeo, for example, was finally arraigned in 1990 on a charge, unearthed from the Marcos archives, of misappropriation of petty funds (*estafa*), for which he was to serve four years in jail. Tadeo's real "crime", however, was political: he was one of Cory Aquino's most vociferous critics in the radical Congress for a People's Agrarian Reform (CPAR). This organisation was formed in May 1987 by peasant groups, rural and urban NGOs to challenge the formulation of the Aquino government's ineffectual "Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law" (CARL) which subsequently went through 13 drafts, "during which its few meaningful provisions had been carefully excised, one by one" (Bello, 1987b: 18).

Initial support for radical agrarian reform had come from liberal-left Congressmen like Florencio Abad, Bonifacio Gillego⁸, and the two PnB⁹ representatives, Horacio "Boy" Morales and "Dante" Buscayno, and Senators Wigberto Tanada and "Butz" Aquino (*ibid.*). They had argued for confiscation without compensation from the large landowners and agribusinesses, and for low land retention limits. Unfortunately these proposals on behalf of the landless faced a House of Representatives where 90% of members were big landowners with average holdings of 200 hectares each (Bello, 1987b: 18). The CARL which finally passed through Congress in 1988 was consequently a law which the pro-oligarch lobby in both Senate and the lower House had systematically watered down. The bill which finally became law had, for example, many loopholes regarding the assessment and declaration of hectarage. There were massive exemptions as to crops, categories, and size of land holdings that could be retained by landed families, multinational corporations and agribusinesses. Finally there was the unrealistic requirement that all lands offered to peasant farmers should be compensated at - usually inflated - "market values" (Putzel: 228 ff.; Lane, 1990: 67-70). Bello (1987b) found only one word appropriate for the legislation: "toothless" (Bello, 1987b: 18).

The struggle over land, the most enduring issue in the Philippine polity, would continue to generate the social, political and economic tensions which invited coercion and suppression by the state. In spite of the rhetoric of "restored democracy", the Philippine state was now once again seen by its critics (for example, Bello, 1987b; Constantino, 1988; 1989, among many) to be acting squarely on behalf of the elite oligarchy, for whom land was both a potent symbol, and also the residual economic base, of much of their power. In addition, the running sore of injustice over land was still inflaming the communist-led insurgency, providing a steady supply of new recruits from the disaffected landless. The Aquino government and Congress had collectively opted *not* to ameliorate this injustice by any genuine attempt at thorough-going agrarian reform.

Aquino's pusillanimity on the land question had stood fully revealed in the period of her first executive year, when she still had a "revolutionary mandate" to hand down reformist decrees untrammelled by Congress, as yet unelected - but she refused to do so. Her prevarications then on agrarian reform have been seen by critics (Bello, 1987b; Constantino, 1989; Putzel, 1992) as evidence of her true political proclivities. Although portrayed as a "liberal" in the run-up to EDSA, her real political base lay with the conservative business, church and urban elite and middle class fractions - and these had little interest in land reform. Furthermore, her political debt to the RAM faction within the military for the EDSA coup - which was what had really brought her to power - meant that, after EDSA, she was in effect hostage to their demands for a tough line against popular mobilisations.

Instead of a liberal-left stance on land reform and a conciliatory approach to the communists, therefore, Aquino resorted on the military's advice, to "total war" on the NPA and CPP. Because this response tackled the symptoms and not the causes of rural unrest, it was doomed to failure, as the Marcos

regime's counterinsurgency tactics had been before it. As with the previous regime, the military and para-military forces were once again the instrument of a spiral of escalating human rights abuses; and again it was the rural peasantry who suffered most. And all this from a regime which, unlike Marcos's, was publicly committed to the "restoration of democracy".

7.7. *The Pusillanimous Presidency: the Rightward Drift*

Cory Aquino had come to the Philippine presidency with the polity and economy in tatters. Her initial problems included: the unstable yet dominant position of the military; a grossly indebted economy, still substantially dependent on the export of raw commodities whose international prices had rapidly eroded by the mid-1980s; and the lack of viable formal political institutions. Perhaps a major, if not *the* major, underlying cause of discontent was the impoverishment directly related to repayment of the foreign debt. This had reached a massive \$28.3 billion at the time Marcos fled the country, "making [the Philippines] the tenth biggest debtor in the world" (Wright, 1988: 73)¹⁰. Cory Aquino had implied in her election platform that she would comprehensively renegotiate, if not repudiate the debt outright. Once in office, however, she committed her government to honour the Marcos foreign debt burden in full. The Philippine people were expected to pay off this huge burden by yet more sacrifices. The mounting social tensions caused by these conflicting economic and political positions repolarised Philippine society. They were to lead to the policy of "total war" by the military against the communist insurgents.

Another major contributor to the escalating social unrest and violence in 1987 was the military itself. Marcos had deliberately expanded and politicised the AFP, to ensure continued support from the state's coercive arm for his Martial Law policies. Between 1972 and 1986 the AFP had expanded fivefold, from 50,000 troops to a massive 250,000. Sussman notes that this expansion:

would not have been possible without the direct financing and support of five US presidents, who have said or done little or nothing in response to the well-documented record of AFP abuses and organized massacres of peasants and workers [...]

Sussman, 1990: 41.

Under Aquino the army effectively refused to return to barracks. The true intent of the military participants of the "EDSA revolt" came to be reassessed when virtually the same RAM personnel attempted three coups in 1987, the most serious in August. Although unsuccessful in their military aims, these had the political effect of moving Aquino's government steadily rightwards by pressuring her into dismissing those ministers and advisers of even the gentlest centre-left persuasion¹¹. This was partly to assuage fears among the domestic and international business communities about the "stability" of the regime after the military coup attempts, and also about her alleged "softness" on communism.

McCoy (1990) makes the point that the RAM military rebels who led the attempted coups had got their taste for political intervention from

[...] the experience of arresting, interrogating and torturing civilians or serving as combat officers in a civil war [...]. Through this extraordinary service, these young officers, among them the future RAM leaders, [...] learned a false belief in the efficacy of violence and terror as political instruments. [...] And they gained a sense of the military's inherent right to dominate civilian society.

McCoy, 1990: 7-8.

RAM and other rebellious military factions were to mount no less than seven coup attempts against Cory Aquino's government between 1986 and 1989¹² - whenever in fact they disapproved of her policies and suspected there was a modicum of popular support for their actions. The two major coup attempts - of August 1987 and December 1989 - both followed close on popular mobilisations against government attempts to increase the price of oil. Because of their reliance on kerosene fuel and basic public transport, the urban poor were to have been most affected by these hikes. Labour leaders and people's organisations called for popular strikes, or welgang bayan, against the oil price hikes. The coup plotters used this social unrest as a justification for their supposed attempts to "restore law and order", and their calls for a crackdown on the "anarchic elements" leading the mobilisations. The RAM plotters later found it expedient, in an attempt to glean popular sympathy, to modify their own demands to include populist calls for "social justice".

Leading military figures had meanwhile taken upon themselves the role of "presidential advisers". After EDSA Aquino had already chosen, much against the advice of hard-liners like Enrile, to declare her promised amnesty for political prisoners of the Marcos regime, many of them members of the CPP. She also initiated peace talks with the CPP-NPA leaders, but these broke down shortly after the Mendiola massacre in January 1987. This was the moment the military had been waiting for. They now urged Aquino to return to their own coercive approach to the insurgency; Aquino complied.

During the peace talks popular sentiment had appeared to grow more sympathetic to the communists' aims as they took the opportunity to publicise their radical agendas in the media. But after the breakdown of negotiations and the government's declaration of "total war", public opinion swung against them. The "total war" effort was to be especially concentrated in disaffected provinces such as Mindanao, the Visayas and Northern Luzon, and it was in these provinces, unsurprisingly, that violence and human rights abuses rapidly escalated.

7.8. The Post-EDSA Political Machine: Coercion and Persuasion

The Philippine economy is dependent on global finance and multinational capital; on raw commodity exports; and on a skewed preponderance of tertiary sector, assembly, and enclave industries. It supports a rent-seeking, profligate elite, who prefer economic production controlled through a "triple alliance" of profit-taking fractions of the international, domestic and state bourgeoisie to economic production weighted towards indigenous investment and wealth creation, much as in parts of Latin America (Cardoso, 1973; Evans, 1979). Such a model engenders patterns of sophisticated, modern economic "associated dependent development" in centres like Metro Manila and, to a lesser extent, Metro Cebu, whilst creating huge disparities of wealth, and tense social and political relations. These exist in those urban and rural sectors found, for example, in enclaves such as the modern industrial assembly plants of the Economic Processing Zones (EPZs); on the semifeudal *haciendas*; and on the agribusiness plantations which have spread since the 1960s.

The Filipino urban and rural proletariat alike share low wages, and poor working and living conditions in most sectors of the economy; whilst small peasant farmers and the growing sector of landless rural poor barely subsist. Meanwhile the minority of elite oligarchs and bourgeois *parvenues*, alongside those favoured fractions of the middle classes who work in the executive and administrative ranks of private and state industries and the better-endowed state "services"¹³, have increasingly benefitted from the syphoning of wealth from cheap labour, rents, and windfall profits.

The modern Philippine state has evolved partly as a response to these conditions. On the one hand the state has attempted to absorb challenges from the immediate subaltern classes by coopting their leaders. Thus the *ilustrados* of the First [1898] Republic, or more recently Huk leaders, and even former CPP activists like "Kumander Dante" Buscayno have been absorbed into the state administration or bureaucracy, or as collaborators in state "renewal" projects.

Likewise a significant factor in Marcos's own modernisation project, heralded by Martial Law, was his preemptive neutralisation of possible military challenges by a significant diversion of national state resources into the military, and his subsequent attention to the welfare of its higher echelons. The price he exacted was their active collaboration in his personal confiscation of oligarch assets.

The other major method of obtaining acquiescence in Philippine state and elite policies has been unadorned coercion, employed against popular mobilisations whenever they have threatened the elite *status quo*. The military force with which, for example, the Sakdalista uprising of the 1920s and the Huk rebellion of the 1950s were put down, and latterly the counterinsurgency tactics of both the Marcos and Aquino regimes against communist guerrillas, owe their strength and military traditions in part to patterns

initiated by the colonial US forces (CIIR, 1992: 6-7). These first suppressed Filipino opposition in the American-Philippine War. Their influence continued after the formation, early in the century, of the Philippine Constabulary (PC) and Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP). Both arms have been heavily reliant since their inception on US military assistance for funding, and for employing methods learned via CIA and US military counterinsurgency training (*ibid.*).

Alongside these overtly coercive methods of "resolving" or "pacifying" Philippine social and political mobilisations, the Philippine state has also employed sophisticated methods of "co-optation by persuasion" of its subaltern classes - and particularly of tractable fractions of the middle classes. By employing the trappings of a "liberal bourgeois democracy", based on the model imported and imposed by the US colonial administrators, Philippine state institutions such as Congress, the judiciary, and the executive give a strong semblance of the rule of law. The lack of accountability of many Philippine state institutions is not infrequently masked by the forms and rhetoric of the "due process" of a "democratic society". Here the mainstream mass media play a key role, in perpetuating the forms of "pluralistic debate" expected in a "modernising" society with the basic freedoms of speech, assembly and fair elections.

The basic continuities of the Philippine state stretch back to the Commonwealth period: an "ersatz democracy" is controlled by elites whose fractions succeed each other in government, with few economic and political programmes beyond bolstering their own narrow class interests. The trappings of a liberal "free" press appear to allow the articulation of oppositional critiques, thus providing a minimal veneer of public accountability, but these critiques are confined to intra-elite contestations. The media agendas rarely broaden to include genuinely popular interests and political programmes - as distinct from the populist rhetoric invoked to gain necessary mass support for elite projects.

The "ersatz" nature of such a "democracy" is indicated, however, whenever the "public debate" (set on the terms and agendas of the elites) breaks down, and popular mobilisations against elite programmes develop. There is then an abrupt reversion to that earlier form of state control: naked coercion.

The Marcos era can, in this light, be seen as a hiatus in the "ersatz democracy" of oligarch rule, when the oligarchy temporarily lost control of the state to a more tightly controlled set of political agents. These were organised directly around the central figure of Marcos, who ceased to play politics - and economics - by the rules of the former elites. Under Marcos the state terrorism of Martial Law, once in place, was *initially* supported or condoned by both the international and domestic bourgeoisie, as a weapon to "control communism", that is, radical popular mobilisations. The mainstream press during the Martial Law period then ceased to perform even its minimal roles of "watchdog" and "forum for debate" in the public sphere, as all pretence at public accountability in both the economic and political spheres was abandoned.

That such accountability has been at best, in the Philippines, a form of "democratic window-dressing" is evidenced by the comparative neglect in the Aquino mainstream press of human rights issues after "total war" against the communists was declared in 1988. Violations by the military and para-military forces were virtually ignored by the regime. According to Petras (1990) this "state terror is not casual". It arises because:

movement politics resonates among the poor and cuts deeply against the grain of so many fundamental interests of the elites [that] it evokes pathological violence from the latter [...].

Petras, 1990: 183.

Like Guatemala and El Salvador, therefore, and for similar reasons, the Philippines under Aquino remained the "death-squad democracy" it had been under Marcos, whilst reestablishing the constitutional forms of pre-Marcos "liberal democracy". In times of serious conflict, however, such constitutional guarantees were revealed to be fragile at best, and at worst non-existent.

The Aquino administration was, by 1987, increasingly captive to right-wing agendas. Foremost in affecting government policies, perhaps, were economic factors, at both international and national levels. Whereas under Marcos the Philippine state had grown particularly corrupt, politically unresponsive, and economically unaccountable, under Aquino it became politically hamstrung and ineffectual as well. As a putative "liberal broker" between competing elite factions her government was hostage to the demands of the military, of domestic oligarchs - and of international finance. Pressures from the IMF and World Bank grew, yet again, for further liberalisation of the economy, which meant even greater penetration of international capital. There were also the seemingly inexorable demands to carry on paying back the foreign debt. This, of course, had been incurred by the Marcos regime, with the collusion of the same international financial community now making the demands for repayment and the "liberal" restructuring of the economy.

Structural adjustment policies meant a steady cut-back in public services and cuts in subsidies to essential food staples and oil. These policies sparked the welgang bayan and attempted coups of 1987 and 1989. This was an economic and political scenario similar to that which had provoked the destabilising crises between 1981 and 1986 which had finally led to EDSA. Given the known outcomes of the pre-EDSA policies, the obstinacy with which similar "liberalisation" programmes were pursued in the post-EDSA era was remarkable.

The policy continuities were no accident. They were due in part to the fact that the Aquino regime possessed strong political links with the old pre-Martial Law oligarchy at both national and local level. At the 1988 elections for local government (governors, mayors and town hall administrators), local

caciques climbed back via the "Aquino ticket" into positions of political prominence - the web of local political bosses which Anderson (1988) has vividly described. The re-elected "trapos" included:

[m]any traditional political dynasties [who] were restored or strengthened, such as those of the Aquinos [in Central Luzon], Singsons, Salongas, Villafuertes, and Osmenas [of Cebu]. [...] The conduct and results of the 1988 local elections revealed the persistence and vitality of traditional politics in the Philippines.

Timberman, 1991: 220.

7.9. *The Philippine Press under "Democratic Transition"*

Significantly, another institution on which the oligarchs had re-established their grip immediately after EDSA was the Philippine media. This section makes a preliminary survey of the post-EDSA mainstream media. It examines in particular the changing patterns of media ownership and control and relates these to the economic interests of the business community, and to the political behaviour of the elite community in general. Above all it scrutinises the constraints acting upon a "free" press and asks how these have inhibited the media in their performance of "watchdog" and conduit roles in a period of political transition. The concern here is to set the broader context for a consideration of the relationship between the post-EDSA media and the emergent polity. What were the major changes experienced by the Philippine media, and particularly the English-language press after EDSA? Were the changes viable economically and politically over the long-term? What roles did the media perform which buttressed elite or non-democratic interests?

Some of the tensions within the post-EDSA press have been economic in origin: between owners and staff over labour conditions and pay, for example, or regarding viability in an oversubscribed market. The Philippine press has, in fact, remained something of a contradiction in purely capitalist terms, because the market is too small to sustain upwards of 25 papers. A comparison with London and New York brings home the fragility of the Philippine situation. New York supports one "quality broadsheet"; five are currently published in London, with circulations ranging from one million down to 300,000¹⁴.

In the Philippines, by contrast, there is a potential maximum circulation for all broadsheets of perhaps two million, shared between nine to 15 newspapers, with individual top sellers now hovering between 250,000 and 300,000. The Philippine public, moreover - particularly middle class readers - have had, during successive economic crises, other priorities besides keeping "well-informed". It is small wonder that, of the Philippine national dailies:

[...] only three claim to be turning a profit [...]. Reduced to scrabbling for advertising crumbs, the rest [.. have established] clandestine linkages with interest groups or [cut] back on their labor components.

Nieva, 1991: 121.

The financial pressures on the Philippine press have clear repercussions on a newspaper's independence, "integrity" to news values, and the way it handles political issues:

Some of the papers now being published claim to enjoy connections in varying degrees with government, business or political interests, explaining their sometimes remote and isolated stances on national issues.

Nieva, 1991: 123.

Sussman observes that most mainstream newspaper publishers, faced with rising costs for imported newsprint and printing materials, and an underpaid labour force asking for a minimum of security and decent wages, "found common cause with the president". Aquino, for her part:

[...]appear[ed] to believe that she need[ed] the publishers more than pro-union journalists, and [was] willing to make concessions to the former, such as discouraging collective bargaining, and ignoring the constitutional violation of the Lopez family owning multimedia in the same market.

Sussman, 1990: 43.

It is clear, therefore, that the extent of democratisation cannot simply be assessed from constitutional provisions such as "freedom of speech, assembly and organisation". Economic and political pressures and other factors will affect the development of a genuine political will to implement such provisions. As Cardoso (1986) wrote of the Brazilian case in the mid-1980s, for example:

When the flames of wage claims began to singe the direct interests of enterprises, the enchantment of a consensus of liberal attitudes evaporated. [...]the private sector began to view the [Brazilian] government as, if not an ally, then a necessary barrier for containing the avid manner in which pressure for liberalization, stirring among the masses, was being transferred from an institutional to a social arena. As a result working-class democratisation was shattered.

Cardoso, 1986: 149.

This lesson applies to the Philippine liberal press, its owners and readers. Be they ever so "liberal" in theory, the owners cannot allow attitudes - struck in public to gain support for high-minded popular agendas - to interfere with economic survival. Clearly the "freest press in Asia" may be relatively free of political constraints compared with the stifled media of its ASEAN neighbours (particularly those of economically buoyant Singapore and Malaysia). One of the considerations for Philippine media

proprietors must however remain the economic justification for a given title's continued existence. In such circumstances, whose voices and agendas does such a press serve?

7.10. *The Post-EDSA Press: Ownership and the "Public Sphere"*

Press ownership in the Philippines can be seen, above all, as a kind of "business insurance"¹⁵. The former editor of the *Manila Standard* and Malacanang press officer, Rod Reyes, is quoted as saying: "For most owners now, a newspaper is simply an expensive gun in the holster" (*FEER*, 28 February 1991: 25). *PDI* proprietor, Eggy Apostol explained to me: "In the Philippines owners use their newspapers to bop people over the head with. If you don't like me, I don't like you, and I'll hit you with my newspaper" (Apostol, O/I).

In the more liberal political climate of the post-EDSA period, press titles are again being used as economic protection, especially by *parvenu* "ethnic Chinese" and Chinese-Filipino magnates who as a class fraction have acquired increasing economic influence, but still possess less direct political power than their established oligarch rivals. These new business elites, some of whom have risen to financial prominence through Marcos patronage, have included Emilio Yap, the Gokongweis, the Ramos family (no relation to the current president), and Lucio Tan.

Yap, it will be remembered, gained outright control of the leading conservative newspaper, the renamed *Manila Bulletin*, in 1988 (see *Chapter Four*). Given the importance of this "business lever" to him, it is small wonder that Yap has kept a close watch on his editors. Sussman has remarked, as a general point about the post-EDSA press, that:

Reporters privately acknowledge that powerful publishers do not hesitate to exert direct influence on the content of their papers. As noted by the Committee to Protect Journalists, one Manila reporter commented, "We are not afraid that we will go to jail [as under Marcos], but when we write, we always have to keep in mind who owns us".

Sussman, 1990: 41-2.

An instance of Yap's interference in editorial policy arose in 1989. He removed the newspaper's business editor because of the latter's backing for policies of central bank officials which conflicted with Yap's own banking interests (*FEER*, "Watchdogs or Vultures?", 28 February 1991, p.25).

The Ramos's *Globe* enjoyed a reputation as a liberal-left rival to the *PDI* for several years, until its closure in 1992. It published, for example, a regular column by the left-nationalist historian, Renato Constantino Sr., who had also been chairman of the directors' board of *Malaya* in its halcyon, "alternative" days. His articles analysed Aquino's policies from a critical perspective, pointing to her

regime's links with traditional oligarch and US interests as a factor inhibiting attempts at reform (Constantino, 1989).

Malaya, as mentioned in Chapter Four, was sold to the paper's business editor, Amado Makasaet. The new conservative ownership group moved against staff efforts to unionise the paper, and rapidly became pro-Aquino. By the early '90s *Malaya* had, sadly, lost its free-wheeling, critical voice. The new publisher made a point of publicly dissociating his new management from the paper's former "leftist" past. In spite, or more likely because, of these anti-left disclaimers and supposed appeal to a more "mainstream", conservative readership, the newspaper steadily lost circulation and by the early 1990s was struggling to survive (Burgos; Lacaba: *O/Is*).

Minor players in the post-EDSA media expansion have included the Cagangon-Chua family, who have operations in the fields of insurance, education, security and funeral parlours. Their media enterprises include a printing press, a radio station, DWIZ, and the current affairs weekly, the *Philippine Graphic*, a rival to the *Philippines Free Press*. The *Graphic's* uneasy political mix of glowing profiles of the Cagangon-Chua's elite business allies, and the left-leaning articles "smuggled" into the magazine by its executive editor, Jose "Pete" Lacaba, eventually created intolerable strains.

Lacaba had long been a radical voice of the anti-Marcos opposition and had suffered torture under Martial Law as a consequence. His reason for joining *Graphic* had been partly the financial inducement of a relatively good salary (by the standards of Philippine journalism), and partly the prospect of creating a liberal weekly. However he found the proprietors' growing interference in the running of the periodical increasingly intolerable; he resigned in 1994 after two years in the post (Lacaba: *O/I*; *Philippine Journalism Review (PJR)*, March 1994, p.44).

A former Marcos supporter, Enrique Zobel, with major investments in cement, banking and food-processing, financed the new publication, *Business World*, in 1988 (*IBON*, "Looking Back: the Economy under Aquino", 15 March 1992, p.9). Zobel has been linked in business to Aquino's political enemy, her cousin and arch Marcos crony, Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco. The latter accrued vast wealth under Marcos, fled the country with him in 1986, then returned to run on an ultra-conservative "business" ticket for the 1992 Presidential Elections. Zobel employed as regular columnist and stake-holder Ninez Cacho-Olivares, who has claimed a reputation as "the Nemesis of Presidents" (Cacho-Olivares: *O/I*). During the Martial Law era, she had indeed been one of Menzi's "troublesome women" on the *Bulletin Today*, where her needling criticism of the Marcos regime was often couched in parable and innuendo, and eventually earned her the sack. After EDSA she was also highly critical of Aquino's personal performance (Cacho-Olivares: *O/I*). This of course suited Zobel's interests.

Interestingly, Cacho-Olivares has written a regular column for the liberal-left *Philippine Daily Inquirer (PDI)* as well, where her damning critiques of President Aquino contributed to the newspaper's "independent" editorial stance towards the Aquino regime (see below). The point here is that middle class journalists like Cacho-Olivares and Lacaba may find themselves working for publishers whose wider economic and political interests they may not necessarily agree with. Their reasons for taking a particular employment may be financial necessity; or short-term career advancement; or overlapping but temporary ideological convergence with media owners over particular issues; or pursuit of the "power of the columnist" (see below). The net effect, however, is to underline the political ambivalence of middle class media workers - particularly those of the upper middle class from which many editors and columnists are drawn - to the economic projects of their bourgeois masters, the press owners and their elite allies.

Criticism of a particular regime, as we have noted already in the case of the Marcos administration, often serves the interests of elite oppositionists more effectively than it does those of the lower class majority, because underpinning the critiques are elite agendas which assume systemic political continuities. However the very ambivalence of middle class fractions to these agendas may mean that, under crisis conditions, certain fractions have been prepared to build political alliances with popular classes, and articulate their (temporarily shared) causes and agendas. This is what had happened in the Philippines between 1983 and 1986. It is also important to note that different middle class fractions enter such alliances with varying degrees of enthusiasm. It is necessary to differentiate between those middle class fractions working in the public service from those in private enterprise, and in non-governmental sectors. Clearly it is the last-named whose class interests *may* most closely coincide with popular class concerns, because their work frequently centres on such an identification.

By the mid 1990s, some middle class workers in cause-oriented NGOs, local POs (people's organisations), and labour, social and church organisations had begun, somewhat belatedly, to form conscious links with the media, both mass and micro, in an attempt to alert them to the popular issues and agendas that most affected their "clientele". How responsive the media are to such lobbying will be examined in more detail in subsequent chapters. Suffice it to say here that Martial Law and its aftermath did create important new linkages between oppositional political groups and critical media voices, and some of these have persisted, among particular segments of Philippine society, to the present.

7.11. Gagging the Post-EDSA Press: the Gatchalian Case

The linkages between pre- and post-EDSA popular groupings are more than matched, in the media as elsewhere, by those of the Philippine elites. In terms of continuities with the pre-Martial Law oligarchs and Marcos cronies, one very important factor in the post-EDSA patterns of media ownership deserves particular mention. This is the economic linkage between the ownership of press titles and other tertiary

sector enterprises and rent-seeking activities. This pattern has been noted among both pre-Marcos oligarch media owners and their Marcos crony replacements. It has been continued into the Aquino era by not only the traditional media oligarchs but also a *parvenu* elite fraction of "ethnic Chinese" entrepreneurs. These have found themselves increasingly in conflict with the older established oligarch families of Spanish and mestizo Chinese-Filipino descent.

Some of the *parvenu* magnates have strong familial links with Chinese entrepreneurs from Taiwan and Hong Kong, for example, and have been able during the Aquino era to encourage the latter into investing capital in the country, in joint ventures, Export Processing Zone (EPZ) projects, and the like (Kunio, 1988). The older oligarch families, such as the Ayalas, Ortigas, Sorianos and Aranetas meanwhile have continued to rely more on established sources of revenue from land rents and real estate, or holdings in more traditional, and now declining, oligarch economic activities such as mining and sugar (*FEER*, "Power to the Plutocrats", 12 July 1990: 40).

It is, therefore, often the conflicts and tensions between these different bourgeoisie fractions - *parvenues* versus established oligarchs - which their respective media outlets are designed to articulate. Such conflicts arise particularly over *comprador*, quasi-*rentier*¹⁶ and tertiary sector activities with short-term profitability or potential economic advantage. These are not infrequently associated with state patronage and control, such as dutiable import and licensing concessions, and state-protected monopolies. They also include certain speculative activities such as land acquisition and land sales which may bend or circumvent the law, and, as mentioned above, the spoils of sequestration of Marcos crony assets (Kunio, 1988: 71-72; 75; 77; 79-80; 86-87; 93).

Because of the often undisclosed stakes of Philippine business elites in media holdings, the ability of the press to make genuinely independent reports on corruption and law-breaking, or even disclosures of interest, is severely constrained. This in turn reduces its capacity for investigative and "watchdog" roles; the maldistribution and abuse of economic and political power remains clandestine and often unpublicised. Much elite economic and political activity is not accountable simply because the media are often gagged by their elite ownership affiliations. "Whistle-blowing" is invoked primarily to damage rivals, not necessarily to root out corruption *per se*. The potential to muffle the Philippine press, or to use it as a business weapon, cannot give rise to pluralism in the democratic sense of a presentation, debate and informed assessment of opposing views. It leads merely to a cacophony of conflicting elite voices attacking each other. Without any background contextualisation the average lay reader cannot hope to understand the deeper economic and political implications of such "whistle-blowing" attacks. The net effect is similar to that of the constraints imposed by state censorship: distortion of the truth. The manipulation and censorship now come directly from dominant, or would-be dominant, elite fractions. The result is a kind of "media guerrilla warfare" perpetrated by, or on behalf of, those elites: their

strong self-regard for their business and political interests and reputations leads them to do battle for public opinion through media manipulation against their rivals.

Mention has already been made of the corruption of the media themselves during the Marcos era (Chapter Six). Both the practices of "AC-DC" ("Attack, Collect - Defend, Collect") and "envelopmentalism" - whereby direct or indirect bribes were paid by unscrupulous public and business figures to unscrupulous journalists - flourished under Martial Law. Sadly, they have still remained very much in evidence in the post-EDSA period.

A case from 1990 illustrates the inhibiting effect such a system has on "open" reporting in an apparently "free and democratic press". William Tiu Gatchalian, one of the Philippines' richest magnates, came under investigation for owing a total of P[esos]87 million (\$35 million) in unpaid taxes from his plastics manufacturing firm, P49 million from (industrial) electric meter tampering, and alleged involvement in a P272 million customs fraud (*Philippine Journalism Review (PJR)*, "Did the Press Come Out Clean?", December 1990, pp.24-6). Matters finally came to a head when he faced possible deportation for alleged possession, from 1961 onwards, of fake Filipino citizenship.

The case was complex. However, after initial media interest, his story mysteriously "faded" from the news, prompting suspicions that reporters were being paid to "kill" the case in the newspapers (*ibid.*). Five reporters were alleged to have received P9,000 each from Gatchalian. The allegation was made by one of their number, who also claimed to "moonlight" as Gatchalian's PR (*ibid.*). It was discovered that Gatchalian had contributed to the setting up of the *Star* Publishing Corporation (see below). He was also "allegedly an influential stockholder in some newspapers" and had "28 reporters [...] listed in [his] payroll" (*ibid.*). A minority holding in Philippine Commercial International Bank, for example, gave him an interest in both the *Manila Chronicle* and the *Manila Times (FEER)*, "Watchdogs or vultures?", 28 February 1991, p.21). Perhaps it was small wonder, then, that reporters, working on papers with "alleged" ownership links to Gatchalian and his friends, found their editors uninterested in pursuing the case.

Much of Philippine reporting of scandal takes the form of a rumour mill, with "allegations" and counter-allegations ricocheting between economic and political competitors bent on denigrating their rivals. Corruption within the media has meant in turn that, in circumstances like the Gatchalian case, it is unlikely that the story would be reported fairly, or that deeper media investigation could develop unhampered. This media corruption is a manifestation not only of the financial insecurity of the Philippine journalist's profession, where bribes, however trifling and ultimately demeaning, retain allure. It also indicates the importance, to what are basically *comprador*, *rentier* or rent-seeking elite fractions, of "public image", upon which may depend the next opportunity for plundering the public purse, or profitable activity in the private (non-productive) tertiary sector.

"Media image" becomes, in this context, a good investment: it may achieve immunity from public prosecution or political reprisals; it may provide a *quid pro quo* protectional basis for shady economic dealings and alliances with those positioned to distribute political patronage and power; or it may be used simply to attack, or defend against, rivals and their own claims and bids (Theobald, 1990: 76 ff.). The media are no longer seen as a conduit of information but as a weapon with which to fight the economic and political conflicts of capitalism, and deliver some of its spoils.

Endnotes to Chapter Seven

1. Average per capita income actually fell by 18.8% between 1981 and 1986 (cited in Montes, 1989: 58).
2. Media sequestration, according to vice-president Laurel, was intended "to protect the government's proprietary interests that [might] exist in [...] media companies by way of ill-gotten wealth or loans from government-owned banks" during the Marcos era (cited in Abraham, 1986: 10).
3. Typically "micro" and/or "group" media articulate the opinions of focussed, usually organised, sectors, including NGOs and POs. (See Chapter 10).
4. Pro-Marcos soldiers mutinied and seized control of Channel 7 television station in Metro Manila, but failed to capture any strategic locations, either civilian or military (Lane, 1990: 46).
5. The "political left" was, overwhelmingly, the "natdems" and their new alliance, BAYAN; the "popular left" included many of the cause-oriented groups representing popular sectors, who had been active in the pre-EDSA "Parliament of the Streets".
6. Lakas ng Demokratikong Pilipinas, "Strength of Philippine Democracy, was formed by Aquino supporters anxious to avail themselves of "pork barrel" in the time-honoured traditions of old-style Philippine politics (Goodno, 1991: 190).
7. Kilusang Bagong Lipunan (the "New Society Movement").
8. Bonifacio Gillego was the former army intelligence officer who broke the story of Marcos's fake war medals to *We Forum* from his exile in the US. He returned to the Philippines in 1986 to head the newly-formed National Union of Christian Democrats (NUCD), which gained three seats in the 1987 congressional elections (Goodno, 1991: 134).
9. PnB, the Partido ng Bayan or "People's Party", was the left-wing coalition party backed by the radical left.
10. Already by 1983, at the beginning of the economic crisis, the foreign debt was equivalent to 73% of GNP; this ratio subsequently worsened as the terms of trade on traditional exports continued to fall (Wright, 1988: 70).
11. Dismissals and resignations from Aquino's cabinet after the November 1986 coup attempt included the left-leaning Labour Minister, Bobbit Sanchez, and local government minister, Aquilino "Nene" Pimentel; Arroyo resigned his post as Executive Secretary after the August 1987 coup attempt (Timberman, 1991: 180;188).

12. The number of coup attempts is also sometimes computed as six or eight, depending on the evaluation of their seriousness.
13. These would include customs and excise, state monopolies such as the sugar and coconut authorities - which grew enormously in number and size under Marcos - and, of course, the military and police.
14. Guardian, Circulation figures, 1996.
15. This pattern is by no means confined to the Philippines. Tiny Rowlands' ownership of the *Observer* in Britain was used to protect his business interests in Africa and in the Lonhro Company, and to attack his rivals, the Al Fayeds, for control of Harrods (*Guardian*, "Bid for Sunday paper 'absurd'", 30 January 1995, p.3.).
16. Examples included the sugar and coconut monopolies and also dubious land acquisitions and enterprises confiscated from the old oligarchy during Martial Law. Although a number of these enterprises changed hands again after EDSA, their economic bases remained artificially protected (Kunio, 1988: 68; 70-71; 158).

8. CHAPTER EIGHT. ISSUES OF THE MAINSTREAM PRESS, 1986-1993.

8.1. Introduction: Press Survival and the "Public Sphere"

Narrow private interests have constantly sought to divert the Philippine press from its critical "watchdog" role within the "public sphere". They have attempted to suppress the reporting of those of their activities which could be injurious to the wider economy or polity by "gagging" the press. This aim has been achieved variously through direct censorship, through the threat of libel, or through other economic or political inducements and sanctions such as bribery, influence peddling, withdrawal of advertising revenues, and even curtailed access to newsprint. Certain newspapers have been in a stronger position than others, at any given historical moment, to withstand such threats and sanctions. Indeed, succumbing to such manipulations has often damaged a newspaper's "credibility" with its readership in the long term, as the history of the Marcos "crony" press demonstrates. This potential damage, however, is of little concern to those entrepreneurs engaged in rent-seeking and other opportunistic business ventures, who see the media primarily as short-term instruments of public relations. They are prepared to employ whatever means come to hand to secure themselves a "positive" press. Media ownership then becomes the "ultimate insurance policy".

Conversely one of the ways in which a newspaper can demonstrate its "independence" is in its reporting of elections. In fact, most newspaper proprietors, and their staff, would admit to partisanship in their election reports. The question remains whether *opposition* parties and candidates can expect a fair hearing, or whether such voices are wholly or partially "gagged" - as they frequently are in elections held under authoritarian regimes. Beyond these considerations lies a deeper question: are a genuine diversity of alternative political platforms being presented in the media overall, or does election reporting merely present variations on narrow hegemonic agendas?

I consider in this chapter the way in which the Philippine press reported a key election at the end of the so-called "transition" period, namely the 1992 election for a new president, and for local and national legislators and administrators. According to formal electoralist definitions it was this election which marked the beginning of the "consolidation" phase of democratisation. My concern is to examine how elite and popular forces used their respective networks, within the media and within the wider polity and economy, in attempts to affect the electoral campaign. It would clearly be naive to expect all media accounts to have been "fair", in the sense of presenting "balanced" critiques of all candidates. It is legitimate nonetheless to consider what role media ownership played in the reporting of the 1992 elections - it was most certainly significant in the elections held during the Marcos era.

In a one-man dictatorship or single-party state, like the Philippines under Marcos or present-day Malaysia, candidates who oppose, or are not endorsed by, the incumbent regime are given very short shrift in the media. Whilst government candidates and their programmes are portrayed in generally positive terms, any opponents with platforms which presume to challenge the political *status quo* face misreporting or neglect. In the controlled press their campaigns are ignored; or unsubstantiated "dirty" allegations, made against them by government supporters, are reported as fact.

Did the position change significantly in the post-EDSA period amongst the Philippine press? In what ways did the media's predilection for "colourful" events and personalities enhance or detract from the reporting at election time of substantive issues and political platforms - the information on which a truly "democratic choice" might have been made by the electorate?

In the wider public sphere, the potential for conflict of interests between press owners, their editors and staff, and their audiences is considerable. To take one example, the wish of owners to promote pro-business aims clashes not infrequently with an editor's professed desire to maintain the professional media ethic of "objectivity" and "balance". These latter qualities may prove to be elusive, as a number of media theorists have argued (for example, Hall, 1977: 345-6; Lichtenberg, 1991: 216-231). However, if media practitioners feel their professional integrity is being consistently challenged, the tensions may sometimes be resolved only by resignations and migrations. This is certainly what happened to a number of journalists during Martial Law: "independence" and "integrity" have always come at considerable economic and political cost, both for newspapers and for individual practitioners.

This chapter therefore first explores to what extent examples of the post-EDSA press could lay claim to be "independent", and what contribution such "independence" might make to processes of democratisation. It also considers what costs, economic and political, the maintenance of an "independent voice" might entail. The inquiry may be formulated differently. An "ersatz" or "facade" democracy may have superficial forms of democratic institutions - competitive elections, separate executive, legislative and judicial arms and constitutional "freedoms". Yet it may lack an organic political ("civil") culture which could enable any substantive challenges to the political *status quo* to impact seriously on political agendas. In short, apparent "electoral choices" might still remain within exclusive and narrow parameters defined by the dominant hegemony. This condition may indeed be near-universal in capitalist liberal democracies, but the tolerance of genuine diversity may vary considerably from state to state, particularly in the Third World.

In countries like the Philippines the gap between substance and facade is reinforced by the manner in which the traditional oligarchy can exclude debate on alternative political agendas through its control of political instruments like the media. "Ersatz" or "facade" democracy is the only version which then gets discussed - and not only at election time - simply because substantive democracy, with its emphases on

democratic empowerment and accountability, is displaced from the framework of debate. In general this exclusion comes not through coercive means, as in an authoritarian state, but by a more subtle identification of the national (and local) polity with elite interests - to the exclusion of the majority. Any articulation of challenges to elite interests through media outlets, however sporadic and unsustained, will meet with a number of obstacles, not least in threats to their continued economic reproduction. This is illustrated by a detailed consideration of the chequered history of one such "independent" press outlet, the *Philippine Daily Inquirer (PDI)*.

8.2. Case Study: the Philippine Daily Inquirer

The case of the *PDI* is an illustration of the internal politicking and struggles over ownership and control of an "independent" newspaper, and their relationship to issues of economic survival. The case demonstrates that viability in the Philippine media can be achieved in spite of economic and business considerations like those discussed above, but that such viability is precarious. It exemplifies above all the economic and political tensions engendered by the desire to maintain an "independent" press. The *PDI* has been an apparent success story of the Aquino era. Within seven years of its establishment, it was able to vie for market leadership with the long-established *Manila Bulletin*, and this without any oligarch or other "big" money (Apostol: O/I). Its masthead reads: "Balanced News, Fearless Views", and its owner and editorial staff have been proud of their "independence". This section considers what factors its success has depended on. Just how "independent" has it been? What class interests has the *PDI* represented? And how interested has its editorial board been in representing marginalised voices?

The *Inquirer* was launched in February 1985 by Eugenia ("Eggy") Apostol, the proprietor of the pre-EDSA women's periodical, *Mr. & Ms.* and its "alternative" sister publication, the *Mr. & Ms. Supplement*. Both had been successful in capturing a substantial segment of the pre-EDSA oppositional readership, with coverage of the Ninoy Aquino assassination and subsequent outspoken criticism of the Marcos regime. Initially the *Inquirer* had been set up as a weekly to cover the trial of the "Aquino 25", accused of complicity in the 1983 Aquino assassination. The case did not, however, generate the same public interest as the original murder and the *Inquirer Weekly's* circulation at that time did not rise above 30,000. Consequently it lost money and nine months later, in November 1986, Apostol was about to close it down when Marcos announced the Snap Election (Apostol: O/I). This was Apostol's cue to bring out a regular daily newspaper, the *Philippine Daily Inquirer (PDI)*. Given the following built up by the alternative *Mr. & Ms. Supplement* and its journalists, the launch of the new daily was timely. The liberal middle-class public was now demanding "credible" reporting of election issues from a newspaper free of the stigma of the crony press, where news which implied any criticism of the government still remained non-existent.

The *PDI* was initially financed through capital raised by selling shares to interested wealthy patrons, independent media owners and journalists, including its own staff. The idea of a staff co-operative was mooted, but abandoned early on. Apostol decided that it would take too long to establish, when time was of the essence to cover the rapidly developing political events leading to EDSA. Yet once established as a more traditionally-financed newspaper company, the *PDI*'s very success and expansion have engendered economic problems. From the outset the *PDI* had to turn to diverse sources whenever it needed to raise capital to fund its growth. One such source was Betty Go-Belmonte. She provided some of the initial capital, together with access to her family's printing presses, for the setting up of the *PDI* in 1985 (Apostol: O/I).

Go-Belmonte's family were old Chinese media hands. Her father had run a Chinese-Filipino journal, the *Fukien Times*, since before Martial Law. The family were, however, also closely tied to the conservative Chinese business community, the Kuomintang and the World Anti-Communist League (Sussman, 1990: 41). They had been strongly pro-Aquino from pre-EDSA days. Go-Belmonte's husband, Sonny Belmonte, was subsequently appointed to run the national government insurance and pension corporation under Cory Aquino. Apostol, in defence of her paper's "independence", saw this as a conflict of interest, so in March 1986, only five months after *PDI*'s inception, Go-Belmonte left to start her own Star Group of newspapers (see the Gatchalian case, Chapter Seven, above). Two former *PDI* staff subsequently joined her, Max Solven to become her publisher and Luis Beltran her editor¹.

These defections left Apostol with several problems. The first was to find a substitute editor, one untainted with association with the Marcos media. Because of the sudden rapid expansion of the post-EDSA press, however, such personnel were at a premium. Most former "alternative" journalists had already joined new rival mainstream newspapers such as the *Manila Chronicle* or *Manila Times*. The *PDI* also needed to borrow money to buy out Go-Belmonte's holding. An initial sale of stock fell through; loans and share sales were finally arranged with two new groups. Within a year the representative of one of the newspaper's new major shareholders, Mariano Quimson, was appointed to oversee the accounts. He had over the previous twenty years risen from accountant to president at the *Bulletin* under Menzi, but had left after the Yap takeover.

Quimson claimed to have found book-keeping irregularities at *PDI*. This gave him the opportunity to stage a boardroom coup, backed by the new editor, Dick Pascual. He replaced Apostol as chairman with Bienvenido Pangilinan, a business associate, with close ties to Senator Jovita Salonga, the Liberal party president and a presidential candidate in the 1992 elections (*PJR*, "The *Inquirer* Shake-Up", June 1991, p.19). However his motives were clearly based on business opportunism. The newspaper's more established staff rallied round Apostol. They were fearful of further precipitate editorial and manpower changes. In May 1991 Apostol was able to stage a counter-coup with the authority of the state-appointed Security Exchanges Council (SEC), her own shares and the minority shares of loyal staff (Apostol: O/I:

PJR, "The case of the *PDI*, Inc.", August 1990, pp.20-25). A third group, the Prietos, who owned a large paper company supplying the *PDI* with newsprint, emerged to hold the balance between the pro-Apostol stalwarts and the pro-Quimson would-be usurpers.

By 1993 there was the need for a further injection of capital to finance new presses to cover increased circulation. The company was at an economic and political crossroads as it moved to purpose-built premises and sought further capital backing on the stock market. In 1994 Eggy Apostol retired as *PDI* board chairman, to be replaced by Marixi Prieto as president of the newspaper. Whether this would herald significant changes in the paper's editorial stance and overall ideological position in the panoply of Philippine broadsheets remains to be seen. What is clear from this brief history, however is that there has been a continuing struggle for long-term financial viability and the securing of independent ownership, in the face of possible hostile takeover bids.

These may yet occur in the future, as the newspaper becomes increasingly attractive to speculative capital. There remains a fraction of shareholders who want to transform the newspaper into a business venture, a newspaper along the lines of the pre-1972 *Manila Times* (anonymous source: O/I). It is likely that it would then shed its "activist" role as an independent liberal paper, and join the ranks of pro-business newspapers like the *Bulletin*.

Many of its supporters feel that with such a development it would go the way of *Malaya*, unable to compete with the *Bulletin* on its own ground, and losing its present liberal constituency - in market terms, the worst of both worlds. Yet it is well to remember, once again, that the decisions of certain Philippine elite fractions with respect to the media are often driven, not by the logic of capitalist "efficiency" and profitability, so much as by opportunistic calculations of rent-seeking - and the *PDI* in those terms would be a useful "weapon" (see above, Chapter Seven).

What effects do such economic preoccupations have on editorial policy? *PDI*'s relative political "independence" is illustrated by the fitful relationship the paper had with Cory Aquino and Malacanang during the period of her regime. Apostol claimed that the *PDI* had originally backed Aquino's presidency, "[...] but after a while so much was going wrong, we couldn't just continue saying 'she's good'. We had to try and be as balanced as possible" (Apostol: O/I). The newspaper did however remain supportive of the regime and its constitutional legitimacy during the various coup attempts between 1986 and 1989. This was in spite of the Apostol family's personal friendship - through his wife - with would-be coup instigator, Juan Ponce Enrile, who fell out with the newspaper as a consequence. Apostol claimed that the *PDI* even preempted a potential coup attempt earlier in 1989 by publishing inside information on coup plans the day before they were due to be hatched (*ibid.*). However, when the *PDI* criticised Cory Aquino's reliance on US helicopters during the most serious coup attempt of December 1989, a military spokesman for Aquino threatened to close the paper down. The threat was later

retracted, but the shades of Marcos and Martial Law were quickly noted by sensitive media commentators.

Aside from the *Daily Globe*, which continued to carry Renato Constantino's trenchant criticisms of the Aquino administration, the *PDI's* independent stance was more marked than that of most other English-language dailies, notably the *Bulletin*, *Philippine Star*, and *Manila Chronicle*. The reason these latter newspapers were more indulgent of the regime's failures is fairly clear: the business interests of all three owners (Yap, Go-Belmonte, and Lopez) stood to gain from a "positive relationship" with the Aquino government.

The *Manila Chronicle (MC)* under the Lopez proprietorship had hewed to a fairly pro-Aquino line - although this was by no means slavish. Early support for Aquino's new Constitution had not, for example, left it uncritical of Congress and its pro-landlord majority, which it described as "disturbingly reminiscent of the pre-martial law legislature. [...] The traditional elite politics [sic] order of power has been preserved" (*MC*, "So what else is new?", 5 June 1987). Given the Lopez family's previous close ties with *trapo* elites, this appears a moderately outspoken statement; it suggests that direct proprietorial interference in editorial policy had remained minimal, in the "light touch" liberal tradition of the pre-Martial Law era. However, the *MC's* judicious approval of the government in its early days certainly did no harm to the Lopez's prime project after EDSA: the early and safe return of the family's massive pre-Martial Law business empire, sequestered initially by the Aquino regime's PCGG from Marcos cronies.

A newspaper with fewer business ties has less to lose when expressing arguments which do not necessarily coincide with elite interests. *Comprador* and *rentier* oligarchs had from the time of President Roxas consistently backed retention of the US bases against nationalist calls for their closure. The disenchantment between President Aquino and her erstwhile supporters at the *PDI* was sealed when the newspaper came out solidly against her stance, not only on the issue of foreign debt repayments, but also on the US bases. The *PDI* was virtually the only newspaper to challenge Aquino's pro-bases position. "After that," records Apostol, "we weren't popular with Cory any more" (Apostol: O/I).

Yet it could be argued that large numbers of the Philippine public, not just on the left, were by that time (1990-91) also critical of many of Aquino's policies, or lack of them. Quite a number of journalists in the mainstream media were beginning by 1990 to echo popular criticisms of her pusillanimity on major questions like land, debt, and endemic poverty (Villanueva, 1992: 174). Maybe *PDI* columnists were merely bolder in expressing that general disenchantment, and in linking it to the symbolic issue of the US bases and national sovereignty.

8.3. "Independent" Voices? Columnists and Critics

Letty Magsanoc, the *PDI*'s editor-in-chief, has claimed that the variety of opinions offered by *PDI*'s columnists has been one of the newspaper's strengths (Magsanoc, *O/I*). She is well positioned to make comparisons: Magsanoc herself began her career with the *Bulletin Today* as one of Menzi's "troublesome women", and was fired for her ironically critical report on Marcos's re-inauguration in 1981. One of *PDI*'s outspoken columnists, Conrado de Quiros, drew attention to an additional factor contributing to the *PDI*'s relative editorial independence: he pointed out that Magsanoc was not financially dependent on her job, as she came "from a rich background" (de Quiros: *O/I*). This, he claimed, enabled her to fight off pressures from the "new business interests" attempting to set business agendas for the paper (*ibid.*). However, he recognised that press "independence" does need to be fought for in the highly fluid situation of Philippine press publishing.

The *PDI*'s avowed aim of "independence" may in part account for the latitude of the paper's editorial stance on controversial issues: its columnists may express contradictory opinions, sometimes side by side in the same edition - and often in forthright, not to say, colourful, language. Columnists are themselves not beyond criticism, however. One particular *PDI* columnist stood accused of sexism, anti-foreign chauvinism, and gratuitous personal insults in his regular column. He was finally fired on a technicality - that of plagiarising an article from the *International Herald Tribune* - but crossed over to the *Manila Standard* to continue writing columns in the same vein (*PJR*, "Plagiarism and column writing", December 1990, p.6). His failings were, and continue to be, shared across the range of the Philippine press by other columnists whose use of virulent language is somehow identified with "fearlessness". Whether this creates the material for stimulating debate, or for opinionated confusion, is a moot point.

Magsanoc admits that "there are too many columnists who don't do enough legwork. They just sit at their desks and poach other people's stories. They don't need formal qualifications; even politicians can come in and be given a column" (Magsanoc: *O/I*). Reporters have complained that "having a column [...is] a power trip, an ego trip. A columnist is someone who is powerful, who is adulated" (*FEER*, "Columns of calumny", 28 February 1991, p.24.). This is not, of course, a problem confined to the Philippine media alone. A French commentator has noted that for Western media "experts", too, "[m]any know that their power, as well as their fame, has no legitimacy. It is due only to the frequency of their appearances, not to their work or knowledge or skills" (Halim, Serge, "Un journalisme de reverence", *Le Monde Diplomatique*, February 1995, p.14).

One general explanation for the proliferation of columnists in the Philippine post-EDSA press may be economic. With the profusion of titles and consequent low (or non-existent) profit margins in the Manila press, increasing the number of inner "Op-Ed" ("Opinion-Editorial") pages is one means of expanding

a newspaper's advertising capacity. It is often cheaper to fill these inner pages with the commentaries of columnists than it is to expend time and journalistic resources on reports, particularly detailed and time-consuming investigations.

A good, experienced columnist, with a previous track-record in reporting or other media practice in the field, can provide useful contextualisation and background to a news story with which the uninitiated reader can begin to assess its broader significance. A bad columnist, aside from the potential for venality already mentioned, may advance populist opinions unencumbered by the need for the punctilious references demanded of an accurate report. Critics of the "free press" have long excoriated this "power without responsibility", and not only in the Philippines².

The felony of inaccuracy is compounded where the columnist sitting at his or her desk chooses to corroborate evidence with a minimal or narrow network of social contacts. If the columnist's contacts focus on key "movers and shakers" among Manila's decision-makers, s/he is more likely to be content with endorsing the elite version of a story. The conscientious columnist who insists on listening to, and articulating, more marginalised voices, must work harder to build up an often far-flung network, including representative organisations in the provinces and at the periphery. The problem - which is one of both logistics and political commitment - of building such alternative conduits in a predominantly elitist media culture, will be addressed in the following chapters.

It may be worth noting here, however, that where a press is strictly censored - as in the Philippines under Martial Law or in present-day Malaysia - political columnists are among the first victims of retrenchment, both economic and political. A survey I carried out in Kuala Lumpur covering newspapers published over a two-month period in 1993 revealed no political "opinion" columns worthy of the name in any of the three leading English-language dailies³. The last of any note had been in 1987, before the draconian clampdown on critics of the regime. It may therefore well be that the freedom of columnists to write political opinion at all - whether trivial or trenchant, critical or adulatory - is one small indicator of a "liberal" media. Some of the political comment of the Philippine press does indeed encourage wider debates about the development of Philippine society; equally, much of it remains at the level of *tsismis* or gossip.

In helping to focus and explain certain key political events "critical" Op-Ed columns might be claimed to be contributing, however incrementally, to pluralistic political debate - and hence one aspect of the democratisation process. Conversely it might be argued with Barthes (1973) that such "liberal discourse" permits mild, but not radical, criticism of the hegemonic capitalist system only in small harmless "doses". It thereby, he maintains, "immunizes" the system against the "generalized subversion" of counterhegemonic agendas "by means of a small inoculation of acknowledged [systemic] evil" (Barthes, 1973:164).

8.4. "Democratic Consolidation"? Reporting the 1992 Elections

This chapter has thus far considered some of the underlying structural factors operating within the media - such as financial exigencies and economic pressures - which may potentially hinder the free exercise of the press's "watchdog" and conduit roles. We can now consider how such structural factors may affect overtly political activities and their outcomes. Of particular interest are the roles which the Philippine media play in the more formal elements of the democratisation process. This section looks at the record of the press in reporting the most significant Philippine election since EDSA. It will survey the way certain candidates were treated in a handful of newspapers; compare these reports with various alleged biases, exclusions, and attempts at manipulation by candidates and their supporters; and analyse the overall outcome in terms of the evolving Philippine polity in the 1990s.

Elections are a clear target for both political and media analysis. A major political requirement in any basic definition of democratisation is that of free and fair elections. Furthermore, as Lionel Cliffe has written apropos Namibia, an examination of elections:

[..] open[s] up a window to see into the deeper popular dimensions of political life that connect[.] the mass of people to the main organs of politics. Moreover, the patterns that are revealed are etched more clearly at the moment of an election because of the heightened intensity of political activity.

Cliffe, 1994: 3. Emphasis added.

The state of "heightened intensity of political activity" applies particularly to Philippine elections, which have long been seen as popular events, somewhat in the mould of US elections.

The Philippine elections of 1992 especially repay detailed examination. Firstly, according to "electoralist" definitions of democratisation (Wurfel, 1990; see also, O'Donnell *et al.*, 1986; Ethier, 1990), they represented the moment when Philippine democracy was finally "consolidated", through the first "peacefully contested, and accepted" transfer of political power to follow the Marcos dictatorship. (EDSA itself falls outside this definition, for obvious reasons). Secondly, the scale of the elections introduced certain novel features. On 11 May 1992, some 70% of Philippine registered voters, numbering over 22 million, went to the polls, to elect not only a new president, but also a total of more than 16,000 congressional, provincial and local administration officials (Putzel, 1993: 1). It was a massive undertaking: the average voter in any one of the 170,000 countrywide precincts had to make up to 30 to 40 choices from a list of hundreds. The presidential slate alone was contested, uniquely in Philippine politics, by no fewer than seven candidates - against the previous straight fights between two representatives of major political blocs or parties.

Did the 1992 election differ in any other significant respects from elections held during previous eras? What was the media's role in putting the substantive issues before the public? What forces, if any, were at work attempting to distort the electoral process and how did they affect the media? What, if any, new political forces emerged to challenge the traditional electoral machines, and how were their political programmes articulated?

Like their US model, and previous Philippine elections, the 1992 polls were predominantly personality-led. Coherent programmes formulated by national political parties - or indeed the internal cohesion of the contending parties themselves - were in the main absent. The so-called "two-party" system of pre-Martial years, as Anderson (1988) and others have pointed out, had in reality been a highly fractured system, banded loosely together in two indistinguishable elite parties. These were effectively controlled by national and local political clans. In the 1992 elections the system appeared to fissure into a whole array of largely indistinguishable parties; once again, these were mainly controlled by local political clans. A pattern not dissimilar from previous electioneering was rapidly established. Party networks and machines, ostentatious election spending, and surreptitious funding of favoured candidates by business elites (from logging concerns to the Chinese business community) were strategies carried over from pre-Marcos days. So too in certain areas, unfortunately, was the old election-day tactic of "guns, goons and gold" - using private armies and vote-buying respectively to scare and "encourage" voters.

One major difference with pre-Marcos days, however, was the involvement of certain grassroots groups under the left-wing umbrella of BAYAN. Some of them campaigned actively for particular reformist candidates, chiefly in the local elections for mayors and councillors. Other groups like the radical labour union federation, KMU, however, adamantly refused to endorse any candidate (Rodney Tasker, "Grassroots support", *FEER*, 12 March 1992, pp.18-20). The media coined the neologism "presidentiables" for presidential candidates in general and, for those they favoured, "winnables" (!). The slates ranged from the liberal centre, represented by Jovito Salonga, through the "trapo" centre-right of Ramon Mitra and Salvador Laurel, to the conservative right of Fidel Ramos, Eduardo Cojuangco and Imelda Marcos. These last three had all been strongly associated with the regime of Ferdinand Marcos: Ramos as police chief during Martial Law; Cojuangco as arch business crony; and Imelda predominantly as fellow "chief kleptocrat". Cojuangco was regarded with abject suspicion by the business community, who viewed his designs on the presidency as a covert attempt to recover his "ill-gotten" crony wealth from government sequestration (Rigoberto Tiglao, "Power of the purse", *FEER*, 20 February 1992).

Ramos had partly redeemed himself in popular eyes through his leading role in the EDSA rebellion, and through remaining loyal to Aquino as her army chief-of-staff, then Defense Secretary, during the attempted coups from 1986 to 1989. He was also seen, not least by the powerful Chinese business community, as a credible check on Cojuangco's machinations, and on restiveness within the military ("Fidel's challenge", *FEER*, 18 June 1992, p.16).

The seventh "presidentiable" was Miriam Santiago, best described as a neo-liberal populist, somewhat in the mould of Ross Perot. There was indeed a "suspicion that she [had] tacit US support" (Rodney Tasker, "Grassroots support", *FEER*, 12 March 1992, pp.18-20). She had made her name first as a "graft-busting" (and publicity-seeking) judge, then as an investigator of corruption in the Commission on Immigration and Deportation. Her campaign call in 1992 to "clean up politics" employed a time-honoured populist agenda in Philippine elections. Like the other enduring problem of the Philippine polity, land reform, corruption has nonetheless remained impervious to political solution. Although Santiago and Salonga were portrayed somewhat as "outsiders", it should be stressed that *all* seven "presidentiables" had either served in, or for, the Aquino and/or Marcos administrations. Salonga, the liberal Senate president had, it will be recalled, headed Aquino's Presidential Commission on Good Government (PCGG). It is therefore something of a moot point whether he too should have been technically described as a "*trapo*", albeit a somewhat reformed example - in the manner of Ninoy Aquino before him.

In a study of press performance during the campaigns for the *Philippine Journalism Review (PJR)*, Monica Feria reported that the three newspapers she considered - like their competitors - concentrated in the main on the personalities of the "presidentiables", their "winnability", and their supposed links with the Marcos regime. Other major sources of newspaper stories were the campaign trails of "winnables", and the violence associated with Philippine electioneering - which in fact remained, by previous standards, relatively muted (Monica Feria, "How did the press perform?", *PJR*, vol.3/1-2, 1992, pp.34-52). According to Feria's survey, Ramos, Cojuangco, Mitra and Santiago "hogged most of the newspaper space devoted to election coverage" (*ibid.*, p.37). Whereas the government-run *People's Journal*, perhaps predictably, favoured the candidate backed by the Aquino administration, Fidel Ramos, the conservative *Bulletin* devoted the majority of its positive reports to the pugnacious and populist Miriam Santiago⁴. This was as surprising in terms of the paper's conservatism, perhaps, as the liberal *PDI*'s apparent support of the *trapo*, Ramon Mitra. The *PDI* did, however, consistently oppose Aquino's candidate, Fidel Ramos, for his connections to Marcos and the military. Ramos was also on the receiving end of the majority of the *Bulletin*'s unfavourable stories (*ibid.*).

Although Salonga received favourable treatment from the *PDI* on the occasions when he was reported, in general he got little attention in the mainstream media: at 71, he was perceived as "too old" by the population at large. Although some cause-oriented groups had declared for him in the absence of any radical candidate - chiefly because he had opposed the retention of the US bases in the Senate vote in 1991 - Salonga had fewest financial resources to expend on his campaign and to woo the media generally. He was reported least, and polled last with Imelda Marcos, who also made little popular impact. Given her past record this was hardly surprising.

Putzel (1993) has estimated that national candidates could each legally spend up to \$12 million for their campaigns; the election law also allowed local candidates \$3.6 million each (Putzel, 1993: 6, fn.25). Philippine electioneering has never been for the impecunious. However analysts (de Castro, Vizmanos, Feria, Putzel)⁵ are generally agreed that in 1992 heavy financial backing was no longer a guarantee of popular or even sectoral support, as it had frequently been in previous elections.

Although *trapo* Mitra and businessman Cojuangco may have had ample funds at their disposal, they performed in a lacklustre fashion that did not fire the voters. Against this must be set the somewhat chilling fact that, had not Imelda Marcos split the far right vote, Eduardo Cojuangco, notorious for his plunder of the economy under Marcos and with vast hidden booty still to draw on, might well have polled more than his rival and eventual winner, Fidel Ramos⁶. Ramos himself reportedly benefitted in particular from the aforementioned contributions from the Chinese business and logging sectors (Philippine Resource Centre, 1992). He also put his intimate contacts among the top military brass to good account: "political sources suggest[ed]" that Jose Almonte - a retired brigadier general, RAM mentor, and director of the Economic Intelligence and Investigation Bureau (EIIB) - was "also Ramos's leading fund-raiser" (John McBeth, "Position vacant", *FEER*, 13 June 1991, pp.34-38). Ramos returned the favour upon his accession to the presidency by appointing Almonte as National Security Director. Almonte has been regarded with intense suspicion by the liberal press, as it was known that he had been the instigator of the "Operation Malunggay" police plan, just prior to the 1992 elections, to compile dossiers on media people "consistently hostile" (read: "with a critical left orientation") towards the police ("Expecting the Impossible", *Midweek*, 19 February 1992, p.1).

One of the areas of campaign fund disbursement was on the media themselves. Lou Palpal-Latoc, a top *Malaya* reporter, revealed that Mitra was able to recruit several reputable columnists and major beat reporters to write his press releases, simply by offering them salaries of between four and ten times those they would normally earn at their posts (*PJR*, vol.3/1-2, 1992, pp.34 ff.). Columnists from *Malaya*, *Manila Times*, the *Bulletin*, and the *Philippine Star* among other leading newspapers, admitted to working for candidates. Mitra was, reportedly, the "presidentiable" who most employed their services: one "well respected and veteran journalist who is admired for his [radical] nationalist and independent writings" abandoned his principles to write for Mitra at a rate of P100,000 (approximately \$4,000) a month - between ten and sixteen times the going rate for a top columnist (*ibid.*). Those newsmen who "backed the winner" by writing for Ramos earned the more lasting reward of a cosy job at the Office of the [Presidential] Press Secretary with high salaries and... - power (Lou Palpal-Latoc, "Underground Journalists at Work", *PJR*, June 1992). Thus the corrupt culture of patronage, evident in journalism in normal times through practices like "envelopmentalism" and "AC-DC"⁷, naturally spills over into election campaigns.

Overall there was a lack of serious debate over issues in the 1992 elections, either in the media or on the campaign trail itself. What is perhaps significant as a "media effect", however, is how certain personalities captured the voters' imagination - and why. Most of the analysts cited above have noted that the 1992 elections were "media-dominated" in one populist aspect: media personalities became Congressmen. In this, of course, the Philippines merely follows, as in much of its political culture, the example of its erstwhile mentors in the USA. As Ron Silver, a New-York based actor remarked:

The culture works in sound bites. We don't have discourse: we have bumper stickers. If that's the way it's going to be to function politically, you look for icons, images that can get the message across as quickly as possible, as effectively as possible. Nobody [does] it better in the world than celebrities.

cited in *Midweek*, 6 March 1991, p.45.

One Philippine film actor, Joseph Estrada, had captivated Filipino audiences with his portrayal in over 120 "action movies" of "the oppressed" - from scavengers, farmers and sugar workers to "Robin Hood"-style gang-busters. He was elected to the august Senate in 1987, and voted in as Vice-President in the 1992 elections. He is perceived, equally in politics as in his film roles, as a populist - opposed to Aquino's "political juggernaut" and the US military bases, and vaguely pro-farmer and land reform - but without the gravitas of a serious reformer⁸ (Rodney Tasker, "Real Life Drama", *FEER*, 24 December 1992, p.48-50). Typical of the total absence of any ideological basis for political pacts in Philippine politics was Estrada's agreement to stand as none other than Eduardo Cojuangco's electoral running mate - for no more compelling reason than mutual convenience. Putzel has noted that "Estrada has demonstrated throughout his career that he is willing to tie his popularity to whatever political alliance [...] will suit his purposes" (Putzel, 1993: 19). Although Cojuangco's presidential bid failed, the opportunistic Estrada outperformed all the presidential candidates, polling 33% to Ramos's 23.5%. Once elected, however, Estrada expressed his willingness to cooperate completely with President Ramos, Cojuangco's arch-rival, and was assigned the ungrateful task of heading the administration's anti-crime commission - where he continued to act the role of "gang-buster" to the hilt, staging spectacular arrests before the summoned media (*ibid.*). As *FEER* commentator Tasker noted elsewhere:

In the Philippines, just about anyone who has appeared in a film or hosted a television show is instantly recognisable [...]. Film and TV personality Vicente "Tito" Sotto, basketball and TV star Freddie Webb, screen comedian Augusto "Chiquito" Pangan and matinee star Ramon Revilla [were] more popular in the Senate race than all the incumbents running for re-election.

Tasker, 1992: 18

Critics also claimed that Miriam Santiago, who had attracted a youthful following among those disillusioned with the new breed of "Aquino cronies", was largely a media creation - specifically that of the *Manila Bulletin*. Her campaign oratory was "peppered with images from popular culture"⁹ but, for sceptics, betrayed her political inexperience (Putzel, 1993: 11; Philippine Resource Centre, 1992).

What can be understood from this increasing populist tendency? Is a new media-dominated model for elections about to supplant traditional Philippine *cacique* clan politics? The Philippine political system has been described by Anderson, after John Maynard Keynes, as "casino democracy" (Anderson, 1988: 30-31) - which I have elsewhere referred to as "facade" or "ersatz" democracy. Given the opportunism among Philippine *trapos* and "media newcomers" alike, and the propensity for both to rely on elite networks of patronage, the clientelistic basis of electoral politics in the Philippines has shown itself to be remarkably resilient; it can be confidently stated that it is not about to change radically.

What emerged most strongly from the 1992 elections was the sense of confusion among the elites, media, and voters alike. The struggle among elite factions for economic and political hegemony had intensified in the wake of Marcos's narrow cronyism and Aquino's ineffective role as "liberal broker". One analyst had trenchantly characterised Aquino as "fundamentally conservative, basically elitist but with populist overtones, reflecting her debt to people power" (Letizia Constantino, cited by Renato Constantino, "Civil Liberties and the Aquino Rhetoric", *Midweek*, 27 January 1988, p.19). This was the contradictory legacy she left to Philippine populist electoral politics.

In the face of these confusing signals, the media's coverage of the presidential and local elections was more consistent than at first appears. The press merely reflected the political confusion: in the absence of clear ideological choices between candidates, or any effective challenge to the dominant hegemony, newspapers were free to back or attack candidates virtually at will - a kind of "scatter shot" pluralism, which never seriously addressed the important issues and agendas. Candidates were rarely held to account - to explain their policies, the resultant costs and benefits, or even their past political records. No genuinely radical presidential candidates emerged. Conversely, virtually all the "presidentiables" felt constrained to indulge in the populist rhetoric of "people power", anti-corruption and economic growth. Lip-service was duly paid to issues of development, energy, the environment, education and labour, but rarely in depth, and rarely to look at genuine alternative strategies.

At local level many voters continued to vote for local personalities - into both local and national office. The culture of traditional "pork barrel" clientelism, though gradually weakening under "modernisation" pressures, has remained firmly in place in many rural areas. Faced with a dearth of alternative forms of employment the rural poor must still in times of hardship turn to the unreliable "insurance lottery" of patrimonialism. And their votes reflected this dependency. The new Ramos government looked set to continue this clientelistic tradition: three years into his administration, as Congressmen jostled to ally themselves to the regime for electoral advantage and patronage, "pork barrel" clientelism has remained a continuing force in local politics. Ramos himself has also continued the economic liberalisation and "modernisation" projects of his predecessor. This means opening up the economy to every available foreign investor, and encouraging an "assembly enclave" or "sweated-labour" industrialisation, with the pipe-dream of joining the NICs by the year 2000.

What has changed significantly is the growing conscientisation of reform-minded and radical cause-oriented groups, and the resentment they feel towards the "business-as-usual" mentality of the old-style oligarchs and the newer business elites who are struggling to supplant them in the economy. The mainstream may articulate elite struggles fairly comprehensively; but the resentments and frustrations of the marginalised are seeking other media outlets. The "underclasses" in J.K. Galbraith's formulation, are becoming increasingly "visible" - and vocal - particularly in urban communities (Galbraith, 1993: 170). Although it is still "too early to say" in the Philippine case, their new-found activism could eventually affect electoral - and other political - outcomes significantly.

An editorial in the *Manila Chronicle* three days before the 1992 poll outlined the "New forces in the electoral arena" (*MC*, 8 May 1992). Claiming that the "extent of independent citizen participation [was] unprecedented" in the 1992 elections, the newspaper nevertheless cautioned that the value of this participation had been "overshadowed by the clowning of politicians and the desperate tactics of political parties". However, it claimed that networks of cause-oriented groups - ranging from environmental coalitions to those advocating debt repudiation, agrarian reform and social justice for women, youth and the urban poor - had "contributed their own efforts to raise the quality of Filipino elections" by "asking candidates to make clear commitments" to their own lobby programmes. The editorial concluded: "The larger presence of new forces in the electoral terrain signals the dawn of a more mature, more representative and more responsive electoral process" (*ibid.*).

Whether such a prediction will prove to be accurate in the longer term, or merely the wishful thinking of liberal journalism, remains to be seen. Many good ideas have fallen victim to empty political rhetoric and tokenism, in the Philippines as elsewhere. It is certainly the case though that President Aquino, in restoring the old "pork barrel" funds as a renamed "Countryside Development Fund", invited NGOs to participate actively in plans for their disbursement. Sceptics believe that this was a token gesture in the direction of "people power", to which Aquino may have felt some residual obligation. The net effect of the gesture, they claim, has been to co-opt compliant middle class NGO leaders (Sobritchea, 1994: 7, 14-17). Others point out that the fund has already been hi-jacked by politicians, who from its inception started to syphon off money for their own ends (de Castro, 1992: 60). Yet even the sceptics acknowledge that the "token gesture" has stimulated the formation of activist groups across a wide range of genuine radical and reformist projects.

8.5. *Hegemonic and Alternative Agendas in the post-EDSA Press*

Post-EDSA politics has revived the time-honoured Filipino tradition of switching political allegiance to the strongest party. Almost immediately after any polls, tenuous political alliances and pacts have been formed with the dominant presidential party, as a means of gaining access to political power (including

"pork barrel", in whatever form). The major difference in the post-EDSA era is that each political fraction has initially assembled itself under a separate party name. The net effect, however, has remained precisely the same: the perpetuation of anti-democratic forms of clientelism.

The power of the traditional oligarchs, dedicated to the maintenance of their elite economic and political privileges, may now, however, be somewhat in retreat. Under Ramos's "Vision 2000" - of liberalising the economy further to foreign investors and Export Processing Zone (EPZ) industrialists - service, finance and assembly industry sectors are gradually eroding the economic dominance of traditional commodity exports (Chant and McIlwaine, 1993). The oligarchs are perforce transmuted into, or being replaced by, an urban bourgeoisie dedicated increasingly to the "New Right" agenda of "modernisation" through economic liberalisation. The inevitable concomitant of this strategy is ever-increased dependency on foreign capital, trade and investment, which Philippine history has amply demonstrated is the path to debt, stagnation and poverty.

The mainstream press, in its "watchdog" role against corruption, malfeasance and the most blatant military excesses, has published details of a number of the post-EDSA intra-elite struggles for ascendancy. Liberal newspapers like the *PDI* and *Manila Chronicle* have also been reasonably attentive to the activities of NGOs and POs and their public demands for more equitable government policies; but the demands themselves have remained largely ignored by government. Is this because the only press to concern itself with critical issues is overwhelmingly addressed to an (English-speaking) upper and middle class readership, who no longer predominantly see their class interest in "radical" change? Or is it merely because the government since Marcos only responds to the destabilising threat contained in popular mobilisation, not to discourse and debate voiced in the mainstream press? In other words: is that press seen largely as vocal, but ineffective - one of the charges levelled by the "manipulation" and "propaganda" media theorists?

As my evidence demonstrates there is not infrequently a "cosy" relationship between media owners and executives and power elites. Their networks overlap: from the financing of newspaper expansion (as with the *PDI*-Enrile connection); through business interests (Yap, Lopez, Gatchalian, Cabangon-Chua); to political affiliations (Yap, Go-Belmonte, Locsin and their support for, and connections with, the Aquino administration). Individual journalists are beholden to economic and political elites for "inside information" (Cacho-Olivares: O/I), bribes and perks ("envelopmentalism" and "AC-DC"), and ultimately their jobs (Lacaba: O/I). All these factors encourage a media clientelism and dependency, which reflect broader economic and political relationships in Philippine society. They also stifle dissent and constructive criticism of the Philippine polity in a manner suggested by the "manipulation" and "propaganda" models of the media.

At election time there is an overall ideological confusion bred by an absence of clear, principled, debateable political platforms which can be identified with candidates and their parties. Thus even the liberal media revert to the well-tried formulae of "colourful" personalities and their populist rhetoric. Without a readership nurtured to assess carefully the veracity of often difficult economic and political arguments, populism and entertainment are what tend to sell newspapers - and the "free press" must needs remain economically viable to survive.

Alternative agendas to those of both the "traditional" and the "modernising" wings of the Philippine oligarchy *do* exist. Yet those who advocate them have clearly not been successful in articulating them in the mainstream media - at least, not in a sustained way which might capture the popular imagination at election time. As we have seen, they face a formidable array of obstacles to that pursuit, in the shape of financial barriers to entry, political barriers to access, insufficient resources to sustain long, expensive election campaigns, and a public whose energy and enthusiasm for getting rid of Marcos has been largely dissipated by the inertia of the Aquino administration. Reformers in the Philippines cannot afford to underestimate the entrenched political forces of reaction ranged against democratic change.

8.6. Summary: Press Performance and the Legacy of EDSA

If the Aquino administration did not radically affect the basic structures of Philippine society, what have been its achievements and failures with regard to democratisation? Petras points to the necessity for establishing boundaries in the processes of democratisation which would prevent a misalliance between champions and enemies of democracy (Petras, 1986: 279). These latter, he claims, include "liberal power brokers" whose idea of "realistic" political trajectories are simply the maintenance of institutional and international continuities from the past (Petras, 1986: 274). Confusion arises, he maintains, through identification of the state with particular regimes (Petras, 1989: 26 ff.). Regimes, like that of Marcos or Aquino, may come and go with varying forms of electoral politics, yet the state's project remains essentially the same throughout: to enhance the perceived economic and political prospects of differing fractions of local and international capital.

This is why certain structural relationships within the state remain the same, whatever type of capitalist regime holds power. It is also why assumptions as to the rightness of the *exclusive* nature of elite decision-making, and the restoration and maintenance of privilege, go unchallenged within elite electoral politics, whatever the rhetoric to the contrary at election time. Those holding these assumptions include many who either own the mainstream press, or have privileged access to it by virtue of their elite networks. It is they who articulate the "realistic" agendas convergent with the demands of capital.

In the Philippine case, trans-regime continuities parading as "realism" have included, for example, the repayment of debt obligations to international bankers incurred by the Marcos - and Aquino - regimes. These repayments have heavily burdened the poor, exacerbating social unrest. Such "realism" leads, Petras claims, to "large scale popular defections, the growth of extra-parliamentary activity, the resurgence of militant struggles and the civilian liberal invitation of a greater military presence" (*ibid.*). This is exactly what happened in the Philippines under Cory Aquino during the last quarter of the 1980s. "Total war" was pursued indiscriminately against communist insurgents, legal popular activists, and innocent bystanders caught in the crossfire. These last were largely the rural poor, who suffered doubly under Aquino - not only from increased real poverty as their livelihoods were destroyed, but also from the escalation of human rights abuses, committed with impunity by military, para-military and vigilante forces. The regime appeared indifferent to both the causes and effects of this economic and social polarisation, content simply to attempt to restore the economic *status quo ante* of elite privilege endorsed by political constitutionality.

On this reading the post-EDSA mobilisations - the mass welgang bayan protests against oil price hikes, for example - can be seen as the manifestations of growing impatience with the lack of substantive economic, social, and political reform. The Marcos and Aquino administrations were two essentially similar regimes. Both bolstered certain (albeit differing) fractions of the rent-seeking bourgeois elites, at the expense of any genuine attempt to address the endemic poverty of the majority of Filipinos. They differed mainly in formal constitutional emphasis, rather than in substantially changed policies and attitudes towards those requirements which should underpin genuine democratisation. These constitutional changes should nevertheless not be entirely discounted: they have helped to create a climate in which popular organisations and mobilisations could gain strength to articulate their own alternative agendas and needs.

These needs have included, above all, public accountability, access to decision-making, and responsiveness to genuine pluralistic debates. Whilst under Aquino these issues remained largely unaddressed by government, there did evolve alternative conduits for expressing radical programmes of economic, social and political reform. These will be considered in greater detail in subsequent chapters.

Endnotes to Chapter Eight

1. These two were to gain notoriety five years later when President Aquino sued them both for libel, and was awarded huge damages. This was over an article Beltran had written alleging, playfully, that she had hidden under her bed during a military coup attempt.
2. For example, Lord Tebbit in Britain and Prime Minister Mahathir in Malaysia - both from the authoritarian right - have expatiated, often and at length, on the subject.

3. The *New Straits Times*, the *Star*, and the *Sun*, a recent Kuala Lumpur title, were surveyed (May - July 1993). By Philippine standards, all three were sycophantic in their reporting and commentaries of government policies, much in the manner of the former Philippine crony press.
4. Reports about her mental health, which she had initiated herself, were played up by the *PDI*, but completely suppressed by the *Bulletin*.
5. Isagani de Castro, "Money and Moguls: Oiling the Campaign Machinery" in Tirol and Coronel, 1992; Dan Vizmanos, "Learning from the May 11 Elections" *Midweek*, 1 July 1992, pp.3-5; Monica Feria, "How did the press perform?", *PJR*, vol.3/1-2, June 1992; James Putzel, "Media versus Clan Politics", Conference Paper to ASEASUK, 28 March 1993.
6. The combined vote of Cojuangco and Imelda Marcos was 28.49%, against Ramos's 23.38% (cited in Putzel, 1993).
7. See Chapter Seven.
8. Estrada on one occasion "furiously questioned" a Senate bill which he had himself authored (Rodney Tasker, "Real Life drama", *FEER*, 24 December 1992, p.47).
9. She referred to herself in her election speeches variously as "Indiana Jones in the Temple of Doom" and the "Terminator"; she cultivated the image of a gun-toting avenger against the perpetrators of corruption (Putzel, 1993: 16).

9. CHAPTER NINE. DILEMMAS OF THE PHILIPPINE PRESS

9.1. Introduction.

This chapter analyses how issues like land reform and human rights have been reported by the media of both left and right, and explores the wider political implications of such reporting. It considers to what degree, in times of continuing political tension and mobilisation, media organs can be used by the state and its elites, including the military, to present selective, distorted or manipulative reports about events, their background causation, and divergent opinion and arguments. Such selectivity may exclude the voices of the less powerful and create misrepresentations and even "moral panics" which mask either underlying, substantive issues or the illegal or morally questionable activities of the state and its agents. This analysis raises questions about the effects of restricted access to the media, and the nature of agenda setting. Whose voices were heard over particular issues? Why were certain issues reported in a particular way, and whose interests did such reports serve? Were those reports, and above all the editorial commentary and opinion-forming contextualisations surrounding them, coloured by the economic and political class interests of press owners, editors and columnists?

Did these reports, editorials and opinion ("op-ed") columns attempt to create a clearer understanding of the tensions inherent in post-EDSA Philippine society or, rather, to manipulate public opinion through the use of ideologically-charged rhetoric as a substitute for deeper explanations? These questions will be examined using examples of the detailed coverage of land reform issues by selected newspapers. These have been chosen as a politically representative sample of the major mainstream presses in the post-EDSA period. Wherein lay the political and economic tensions on which the Manila press reported in the post-EDSA period? The reaction of the popular classes to their persistent neglect and exclusion by the Philippine state and its elites after EDSA was to mobilise and organise around contested issues, in an attempt to make traditional politics more responsive and accountable. Conversely certain fractions of the Philippine middle classes entered into collaboration with the Aquino regime to achieve short-term aims promised through "liberalisation" and "modernisation" of the economy. IBON noted that the visible outcomes of this political collaboration included:

[g]overnment employees [who were] pacified with wage increases. Import liberalization brought in goods [...] catering to the typically [W]estern tastes of the middle class. Shopping malls and flyovers were constructed, a people's car was introduced and supposedly low-cost housing was provided - all benefitting the middle class more than the lower classes.

IBON, 1992(a), p.5-6.

However, liberalisation of the economy over the medium term brought further exacerbation of trade imbalances, increased foreign debt and, in consequence, the renewed stringencies of IMF structural adjustment programmes (SAPs). These had already been a feature of the early '80s under Marcos, with

their attendant economic and political crises.

The economic policies of the Aquino administration, therefore, in failing to address the underlying causes of the Philippine economy's endemic weaknesses, also failed to reduce social and political tensions. Rather, at a time of rising expectations induced by the promises of "people power", Aquino's government tended to exacerbate these inherent tensions, as policies like structural adjustment, economic liberalisation and debt repayment caused job losses and the slashing of food subsidies, upon which many poor families depended for survival. The ranks of the urban and rural poor increased substantially (*ibid.*)¹; in turn new mobilisations from the newly-legalised left and popular forces demanded the social justice they had been promised at EDSA. In response, the so-called "liberal" Aquino regime was content to encourage both military interventions from the state, and paramilitary and populist "anti-communist" mobilisations from the far right in order, it claimed, to "defend democracy". The human rights abuses which these mobilisations unleashed were left unaddressed, and in many instances were even condoned by government.

Generally remote from the urban middle classes, these abuses particularly affected those sections of the poor rural population who were struggling for land and livelihood. Human rights violations had risen to an appalling level by the mid to late '80s (Amnesty International, 1988: 1). Yet they no longer made front-page headline news to the extent they had done in the pre-EDSA oppositional press. There was likewise only desultory interest among the urban middle-class readership of the Manila broadsheets for the still-burning issue of land reform.

9.2. The Struggle for Land Reform

Whilst the restitution of contested elections since 1986 may be one general indicator of *formal* re-democratisation, more focussed indications of democratisation during the Aquino era may be found in the record of changing attitudes to land conflicts. This section sketches the political background to the Aquino government's approaches to agrarian reform. The following section will then examine the way in which they, and the struggles surrounding them, were reported in the media. Land tenure and usage has never been reformed effectively in the Philippines because of the predominance among the elites of landed interests. The situation has been characterised by concentrated, often underutilised, landholdings and agricultural oligopolies, owned by rural oligarchs and, increasingly since Marcos, multinational agribusiness. The exploitation, as low-wage labour, of the burgeoning sector of rural dispossessed and other landless, has grown in parallel with the increasing impoverishment of a substantial proportion of the rural majority (Putzel, 1992: 328 ff.).

From the Marcos era onwards this situation has been exacerbated by land-grabbing, sell-offs and land

leases of dubious legality to multinational agribusiness. The situation has continued to deteriorate further for small farmers and the already landless, as available land has shrunk and the pool of casualised labour has swollen, driving the price of rural labour down and the price of land up. Since 1990 much quality arable land, particularly in the Southern Tagalog region surrounding and south of Metro Manila, has been made over to Economic Processing Zones (EPZs), agri-business and industrial development. This has continued to displace and dispossess a large number of small peasant farmers². Almost two thirds of the Philippine population still depend on the land to some degree. The social, economic and political tensions inherent in this situation have, since the 1970s, evoked a state response characterised mainly by coercion and militarisation, as Barrington Moore's model for landed oligarchy predicts (Moore, 1966). Human rights abuses have been associated with many of the struggles over land.

After the 1987 elections, the composition of the new Congress was significantly skewed by the large number of representatives of the landed oligarchy. The Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law (CARL) which, after much wrangling, it finally passed in 1988 was contested by popular organisations. Preeminent among these were the radical farmers' union, KMP, with half a million members, the labour federation, KMU, and the popular umbrella coalition, the Congress for a People's Agrarian Reform (CPAR). The collective membership of the last-named body was estimated at 1.3 million by 1988, representing "the highest level of unity and organization attained by the Filipino peasant movement thus far" (Lara and Morales, 1990: 154). In the provinces, the National Federation of Sugar Workers (NFSW), with headquarters based in Bacolod, Negros Occidental, led local mobilisations for substantive land reform. All the above-mentioned organisations castigated CARL as "toothless" and ineffective.

Weak as it undoubtedly was, however, the law has remained the single major piece of legislation on the land issue that the Aquino administration promulgated in its six-year period of office. Here would appear to be a clear case of a "lack of substantive political outcome" for popular and media protest. Yet Lane has claimed that:

[...] the level of protest and propaganda activity and, more importantly, the formation of a cross-ideological peasant class alliance indicates the extent to which the mass movement was able to take the initiative. [...] The high profile of the parliamentary debates, combined with the mobilizing activities of organizations like the KMP and NFSW in the provinces - as, for example, in the occupation of abandoned land - showed that by correctly grasping the appropriate issue it was possible for the mass movement to begin to unify and strengthen itself again [after losing the initiative in the immediate post-EDSA period].

Lane, 1990: 70.

It is certainly true that the public debates which took place throughout 1986 and the early part of 1987, in grassroots meetings and conferences held throughout the country, drew large attendance from peasant and other popular organisations. They produced a high level of constructive proposals, both radical and reformist (Putzel, 1992: 217-224).

Yet Philippine commentators ranging from the CPAR leader, Corazon Juliano-Soliman, to a former official of the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR), Gerry Bulatao, have found that there were "few determined advocates of agrarian reform in the cities" and that this was a major weakness of the peasants' campaign (cited in Putzel, 1992: 271-2). Putzel himself disputes this, agreeing in effect with Lane that, given the make-up of Congress in 1988, the peasant movement could not have hoped to gain more, and in fact "succeeded in keeping reform on the Congressional agenda" (*ibid.*). Soliman seems finally to endorse the view that, given the landowners' easy access to Congress, and because the redistribution of land would "spell the end of [current] political dynasties", their intransigence to reform was virtually guaranteed (cited in *ibid.*). Due to this intransigence the net outcome of CARL was to defer substantive land reform, and its attendant political problems, until well beyond the Aquino government's term of office.

Both the Sakdalistas' movement of the 1920s and the Huk rebellion of the early 1950s had originated in conflicts over land. Marcos's own failure to address the land question thoroughly had exacerbated peasant unrest, and fuelled the NPA's rural insurgency of the 1970s. His regime's response, the counterinsurgency of the late 1970s and early 1980s, had generated militarisation and human rights abuses. Likewise, oligarch obduracy over land was, yet again, the underlying context for the new escalation of human rights abuses after EDSA.

The weak outcomes achieved in the CARL legislation by the debates, critiques and counterproposals surrounding land reform is also, ultimately, a comment on the limited effect of the liberal media as active conduits of reform agendas. Political elites can always choose to ignore such agendas, however well articulated and mobilised; only insofar as the issues impinge directly upon the interests of metropolitan class actors are they likely to be seriously taken account of.

9.3. Land Reform Issues in the Liberal Metropolitan Press

This section considers how certain key issues relating to land reform were treated in a handful of leading post-EDSA Manila newspapers. They have been chosen to represent the political spectrum corresponding to the "radical" and "liberal" left and centre within the newly re-formed mainstream press. (The pre-EDSA "alternative" press was now largely in disarray, with new initiatives to replace them emerging from the "group" or "micro" presses, as we shall see in Chapter Ten). The treatment of agrarian issues by the right-wing conservative press will be analysed in a subsequent section.

The former "mosquito" newspaper, *Malaya*, had, immediately after EDSA, become one of the major outlets for voices from the organised left: this included church, labour, urban and rural social groups, NGOs and grassroots people's organisations (POs). The paper was no longer "alternative" in the sense

of representing predominantly "advocacy" journalism; as a major mainstream "voice" with a healthy circulation it had now adopted the tenets of "responsible" journalism, with reports that "balanced" views from left and right, including those of spokespersons from government and the elites. Yet editorially it retained its oppositional stance on many issues, criticising the government for legislation perceived to be elitist or against majoritarian interests.

Amongst the liberal-left and left-centre newspapers were numbered the *Philippine Daily Inquirer (PDI)*, the *Manila Chronicle (MC)*, the *Manila Times (MT)* and, after 1988, the *Daily Globe (DG)*. A number of journalists, columnists and even editors circulated among these titles, including *Malaya*, for reasons of personal career advancement, personality clashes or professional kudos. Although there were ideological differences between the papers, they were all generally supportive of attempts at substantive, "pro-peasant" land reform. Conversely they were critical, in varying degrees, of the pro-landlord lobby's largely successful attempts to emasculate reform legislation in the landowning oligarchy's favour. Given the entrepreneurial connections of some of these titles' owners, however, certain conflicts of interest inevitably emerged.

After EDSA *Malaya* continued its pro-radical stance on many important issues including land reform: it reported favourably on many of the debates and demands of small farmers. In his regular column, Renato Constantino, the noted academic and historian, had from the outset queried the *bona fides* of the new Aquino administration's approach to agrarian reform. He had observed already in 1986 that the provision for land reform in the Constitution, then being drafted, was at best tokenist and at worst a recipe for confusion, exclusion and procrastination ("Land reform booby traps", *Malaya*, 18 August 1986). It would also, he warned, leave unaddressed the problems of the most marginalised - including those landless, casualised rural workers who could only hope to work sporadically from one "season" to another:

[The constitutional provision on land reform] speaks of landless "farmers" and "regular farm workers". How about the "non-regular" farm workers?

*The provision is silent about them. And yet [academic] studies [...] indicate that the "non-regular" farm workers are in fact the poorest and the most numerous in the countryside. Dubbed collectively by the International Labour Organization as the "landless rural poor", they include the *sacadas* [migrant sugar workers] in the sugar areas, the *sisantes* in the rice bowl of Central Luzon, the seasonal workers in the coconut and other cropping areas, and the small sustenance fishermen who are slowly edged out by the urban-based commercial fishing fleets.*

Unlike the landless farmers, they have no fixed land to cultivate [...] Neither do they have fixed jobs on or off the farm.

ibid.

These distinctions were well made. The right-wing press and spokespersons for the landed oligarchs (*see below*) often deliberately obscured the wide distinctions in wealth, land ownership, and economic and

political power between the categories of rural dwellers, ranging from landless "rural proletariat" and sharecroppers, tenant farmers and smallholders, through to plantation, *hacienda* and *latifundia* owners; considerable play was made in these conservative sections of the press of landowners themselves being "deserving farmers", who would suffer equally with the landless from land reform. Constantino, conversely, went on to note in his article the real lines of political power in the new Congress, which:

[...] can easily be dominated by the well-funded, elite political parties whose representatives in Congress would naturally refrain from any drastic land reform schemes that threaten the properties or the interests of their financial backers.

ibid.

As a consequence of these congressional interests, the concept of "just compensation", Constantino warned, would also prove to be "tricky". It would, he argued, play into the hands of greedy or recalcitrant landlords, who could make exorbitant claims for "market value" compensation (*ibid.*). Constantino's warnings proved to be prescient.

Malaya's credentials as a "pro-people" newspaper, willing to take up the issues of the urban and rural poor - of which land reform was a prime example - had been established during its pre-EDSA "mosquito" days. Jo Burgos, its owner, was to run on the ticket of the left-wing Alliance for New Politics (ANP) in the 1987 Congressional elections (*see Chapter Seven*), but lost to a "trapo" representative of an old *cacique* family (Burgos: O/I). After retiring from both mainstream journalism and politics in the early '90s, he himself bought a modest small-holding, from where he continued to publish the resuscitated *We Forum* as a resolutely pro-peasant monthly periodical concerned with practical farming problems (Burgos: O/I). Even after Burgos sold his major stake in *Malaya*, its journalists and columnists continued to champion the cause of the small Philippine farmer through the late '80s.

In mid 1987, for example, there was considerable debate over whether President Aquino should exercise her temporary executive prerogative to issue a presidential decree on land reform, before the newly-elected Congress had convened and pronounced on the question. It was assumed, rightly, that the new Congress, like its antecedents in the pre-Martial Law era, would be staunchly pro-landlord, and that Aquino's best opportunity to promulgate genuinely effective land reform, as she had promised in her election campaign, was before Congress entered the fray; yet Aquino refused to act. A *Malaya* editorial spelt out in forthright terms the effects of her pusillanimity. Lamenting that her government had "failed to address itself early enough to the question of meaningful agrarian land reform", and noting her family's ownership of "the vast Hacienda Luisita", the editorial continued:

Had the government had more sense than it has shown so far, it could have endeavoured to come up with a program for redistribution of land wealth prior to, or at the time that it was in the thick of, negotiations with the communist/NPA/NDF rebels late last year.

Why is it that only now, one year and four months after the dictator [Marcos] had fled [...] that the President's advisers should rush into drawing up an "accelerated land reform program" [...]?

All this talk [...] about the Executive [President] preempting the Legislative [Congress] is all crap. [...] If we wait for the time when Congress shall be able to start [tackling the subject of land reform] we shall have a long, long wait. [...] The program that will provide the solution to the country's agrarian reform problem cannot afford all that delay. The masses of people awaiting deliverance cannot wait that long. That's what the Aquino administration should have realized a year ago.

Luis Mauricio, "Cory Missed the Bus" [Editorial],
Malaya, 6 June 1987.

A year later, Congress passed the land reform bill HB 400 as the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law. As predicted it was greatly diluted and amended by escape clauses allowing landlords to retain land for off-spring, relatives, and conversion to agri-business and industrial use, with dates for its effective implementation set well into the future. As the implications of the "toothless" CARL began to be felt, *Malaya* lent its op-ed columns to a spokesperson for the Philippine Peasant Institute, affiliated to the radical peasants' union, KMP, to spell out the peasants' case for "genuine" land reform. The article, like those of Constantino before it, noted how the major loopholes knowingly built into the CARL by Congress would encourage evasion, and worse:

[...] This provision opens the floodgates to corruption and abuse by both landlords and DAR [(Department of Agrarian Reform) officials [charged with its implementation]. Worse, the fair market value scheme [for CARL land sales and transfers] has simplistically reduced agrarian reform to a real estate transaction.

Making private lands the last priority in agrarian reform subverts the primacy of reforming equity relations between the landowners and actual tillers, putting to fore [sic] the interests of opportunistic landowners and pro-landlord congressmen in the likes of [Hortensia] Starke [a far-right Congress spokesperson for Negros sugar planters], Guanzon and Cojuangco [the President's brother].

[...] Congress has just passed a "land to the landed" bill [not "to the landless", as their rhetoric claimed], dumping genuine agrarian reform into a shallow grave.

[...However,] politically and economically gaining from their [own] initiatives, peasants are undertaking land occupations and confiscations of big and absentee landlords. [...] At this historic juncture, it has become imperative for the peasants to alleviate themselves from poverty and oppression. And this stems from a recognition of a fact that no other than themselves, much less the ruling powers, can fulfill their quest for social emancipation.

Eli Guieb, "Roots of dependency remains [sic] in land reform bias",
Malaya, 21 April 1988.

Despite the rhetorical flourishes and occasional lapses in phraseology, this article was a useful reminder to peasant activists that there were indeed alternatives to passive acceptance of Congress's complicity with the landlord lobby. A month later *Malaya* was to report on land occupations by radical KMP farmers ("Farmers confiscate 11-ha. Laguna land", *Malaya*, 18 May 1988). *Malaya* was also one of the

first newspapers, alongside the *Manila Chronicle* (see below), to report on farmer resistance to the multinational Del Monte Corporation's attempts to expand into idle land in Mindanao:

Farmers in Impasug-ong, Bukidnon yesterday threatened to seize idle and abandoned lands in the area to pre-empt the plan of Del Monte Corp.

The farmers, belonging to an organization called Kaanib, said the lands which the transnational pineapple firm is eyeing should be subject to agrarian reform because they are idle, abandoned, foreclosed or foreclosable [in part-compensation for bankruptcy or bad debt].

Totong Uy, representative of the Stop Expansion of Del Monte movement in Bukidnon, said Del Monte's activities would deprive landless farmers in the area the right to own and till the land.

[...] He also warned of the disastrous effects of chemical fertilizers and pesticides used in the pineapple plantation on the health of the people and the ecological balance of the community.

"Farmers nix Del Monte expansion", *Malaya*, 22 July 1988.

Malaya's editorial policies thus determined that the voice of small peasant farmers should be heard in their protracted struggle against the powerful landed oligarchs, their representatives in Congress and the Aquino government. Aside from owner Jo Burgos's personal commitment to the radical cause, his recruitment of editors, reporters and columnists with anti-establishment credentials from the pre-EDSA period ensured that, as long as the paper could maintain its independence from business interests, it remained dedicated to reform through the latter half of the '80s.

Malaya was by no means alone. Whilst it stood out, immediately after EDSA, for its pro-peasant stance, most of the liberal press, including the *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, the *Manila Chronicle*, and later the *Daily Globe*, reported sympathetically the arguments for a more thorough-going land reform than either the Aquino government or Congress had on offer.

The *PDI*, with its urban middle-class readership, its "independence" from oligarch interests and its editors, journalists and columnists recruited from the anti-establishment radical and liberal left, could afford to take a relatively detached view of the struggle between reactionary rural landowners and the popular peasant movement. However it was clear from editorials and reports of peasant mobilisations and agendas that the newspaper favoured the latter group. Likewise the owners of the recently restored *Manila Times* and the newly-launched *Daily Globe* had only tenuous links with the "sugar bloc", and filed generally pro-peasant reports.

Of the remaining proprietors of "liberal" media outlets, only the Lopez family, publishers of the *Manila Chronicle*, had owned substantial sugar landholdings in the provinces. Indeed their fortunes had been initially founded on Visayan sugar plantations in the earlier part of the century. However, their economic interests had so diversified thereafter that these holdings formed only a small proportion of their total business undertakings. Their metropolitan-based media empire had included, before Martial

Law, the extensive ABS-CBN television and radio networks, together with Meralco, the Manila Electric Power Company, which continued to be the major supplier of electricity to the Metro Manila National Capital Region (NCR) and to most of Southern Tagalog, the country's industrial and commercial heartland.

After EDSA the Lopezes had been among the first supplicants to the Presidential Commission on Good Government (PCGG), to have those of their businesses sequestered by Marcos redeemed. By September 1987 they had also come to an arrangement with the PCGG that they would "lease" their former television Channel Two, with its revamped hi-tech studios, from its government managers. However, as *FEER* reported, with US \$440,000 payments already outstanding within the first eighteen months of the "arrangement", there was no sign that the Lopezes intended to honour the "lease" ("Battle for Broadcasting", *FEER*, 17 September 1987: 27). This "inaction" was indicative of their newly restored economic and political power vis-a-vis the new regime. By 1988 they had recovered practically all their former assets, and were in the process of rapid expansion of their television and radio networks throughout the country (*FEER*, 19 October 1988).

It could be argued that this reacquired empire was now far more important to them than any residual allegiance to the rural conservative sugar bloc. Thus the generally liberal stance of the Lopez's *Manila Chronicle* on land reform is perhaps best explained, not in terms of the historical economic background of its owners, but more as part of their wider "modernising" strategy. The Lopez family, through its media holdings and especially its newspapers, could attack potential rivals, particularly old-style landed oligarchs, in pursuit of new business goals.

As the pro-business *FEER* noted, with 78% of all Philippine households owning radios and 40% owning TV sets by the end of the '80s, "[.b]ecause of the media's need for mass support it has often championed popular man-in-the street issues, amplifying the demands of leftwing organizations" ("March of Pluralism", *FEER*, 5 September 1991). Although land reform had not been a burning *urban* issue, the Lopez's cross-ownership of several radio stations with predominantly rural peasant audiences might predispose its leading newspaper outlet to support the farmers' cause.

Thus Amando Doronila, *MC*'s liberal editor-in-chief, who had written an academic critique of the endemic failures of the Philippine post-war economy while in exile from Marcos (Doronila, 1992), commented in March 1987 that Aquino's land reform proposals were "an exercise in tokenism":

It is quite certain that if [President Aquino] waited for Congress, she would virtually be abdicating executive initiative to the vested interests in the legislature - interests which, historically, had crippled previous agrarian legislation.

Those who expect that the President will offer her family's estate, Hacienda Luisita, as a pilot project to demonstrate her political will face big disappointment.

Amando Doronila, "An exercise in tokenism", *MC*, 4 March 1987.

This last comment, as a pointer to where Aquino's ultimate class interests lay, also proved to be prescient. Meanwhile, as CARL was enacted, the *Manila Chronicle*, along with the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* and *Daily Globe*, was prepared to publish the political reactions of the peasant umbrella organisation, Congress for a People's Agrarian Reform (CPAR), to the new law:

[...] Farmers' groups under CPAR rejected [...CARL,] which they criticized as "fake, pro-landlord and deceptive." [...]

A suggestion by Jaime Tadeo, chairman of Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas [KMP, the radical Peasant Farmers' Union affiliated to CPAR], was also adopted allowing farmers to occupy lands [...]. Tadeo pointed out that starving farmers cannot wait for the implementation of [the new law].

"Farmers' groups adopt own version of [CARL]", *MC*, 10 July 1988.

This "suggestion" was to be the basis of new radical peasant mobilisations during the remainder of 1988.

9.4. Occupations, Scams, Evasions: the Manila Press Report CARL Outcomes

Radical peasant organisations like the KMP, backed by the NPA/NDF, had by 1988 initiated their own alternative land reform programme which was dubbed the "Rebolusyong Agraryo" ("agrarian revolution"). They seized and occupied lands of large landowners and of Marcos cronies which had been either sequestered by the state, foreclosed by creditor banks, or were simply lying un- or under-utilised. The movement gathered pace particularly in the Visayan "sugarlands" of Panay and Negros Occidental, and in Central Luzon. The KMP, together with the NFSW, had become "the most organised and militant legal force [...] within the contemporary peasant movement" (Lara and Morales, 1990, 154-5). It had organised the occupation of approximately 70,000 hectares of idle land during 1987 (cited in *ibid.*). NPA cadres also distributed free lands to landless farmers. At a press conference they held on Panay in May 1988 the NPA claimed to have seized 31,000 hectares, of which 24,000 were in the Visayas and 6,000 on the Bicol peninsula of Central Luzon.

This revolutionary approach to land reform was reported prominently not only by *Malaya* but also on the front pages of both the *Manila Chronicle* and the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* ("Farmers confiscate 11-ha. Laguna [Central Luzon] land", *Malaya*, 18 May 1988; "Visayan farmers plan alternatives to Carp [CARL]³", *Manila Chronicle*, 21 September 1988; "Farmers' group hits Cory on land reform", *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 4 December 1988). President Aquino thereupon announced her authorisation of military "retrieval" of the confiscated lands ("Gov't moves to counter rebel 'Carp'[CARL]", *Manila*

Chronicle, 5 December 1988; "Reds' own land plan belittled", *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 6 December 1988). The NDF denounced this governmental counterattack as a "new declaration of war against the poor masses" ("Rebel farmers to resist move of government to retrieve lands", *Manila Chronicle*, 12 December 1988).

A report in the *Manila Chronicle* produced by the alternative news agency Philippine News and Features (PNF - see *Chapter Ten*) described how the movement was responding to the government threats:

An underground peasant revolutionary group has vowed to use armed force if the government proceeds with its plan to retrieve lands reportedly confiscated by the National Democratic Front (NDF) and distributed for free to landless farmers.

In a press statement, a copy of which was sent to Philippine News and Features [PNF], the Pambansang Katipunan ng Magbubukid Gitnang Luzon (PKM-GL or National Peasant Movement - Central Luzon), a member-organization of the clandestine NDF, said the government move was a "new declaration of war against the poor masses" meant to "justify the deployment of battalions of troops in the provinces."

The PKM statement came in the wake of a report by Defense Secretary Fidel Ramos that the New People's Army (NPA), also an NDF affiliate, has seized from landowners in Central Luzon and the Visayas some 31,000 hectares of land and distributed these to peasants.

[...] The PKM also said that in Central Luzon, the country's former rice granary and hotbed of past peasant uprisings, the "Rebolusyong Agraryo" has been initiated by peasants themselves and is not solely the work of the NDF.

[...] Without citing figures, PKM said agrarian revolution in Central Luzon already covers "thousands of hectares".

Agrarian Reform Secretary Philip Juico has said that lands reportedly confiscated and distributed for free by the clandestine Left have little impact and would eventually fail because of lack of support services such as capital, equipment and marketing system.

PNF, "Rebel farmers to resist move of gov't to retrieve lands",
MC, 12 December 1988.

There are two significant points to note about this report, which was typical of a number appearing in the liberal Manila press at this time. Foremost is the source: the alternative Philippine News and Features (PNF) agency, rather than the official government Philippine News Agency (PNA), which habitually underreported non-government sources. PNF, conversely, clearly had direct links with the illegal NPA, with whom the government was effectively at "total war". Secondly it is notable that the report carries the "PNF" byline, indicating that it had not been substantially edited by the *Manila Chronicle* before publication; in spite of PNF's "alternative" status, the liberal mainstream press accepted its journalistic *bona fides*.

PNF had adhered to conventions of mainstream "balanced" reporting, in giving the government spokesperson, Agrarian Reform Secretary Juico, the last word. The liberal-left media were thus

employing an apparently even-handed approach to the reporting of revolutionary land seizures; the report nevertheless highlights the left's agenda and its hopes and aims for a "genuine" pro-peasant land redistribution.

Whilst this was a relatively "remote" issue for urban readers, it also threw up a handful of "interesting personalities", not least the KMP leader, Jaime Tadeo. The mainstream media's traditional focus on "personalities" and "events" (as distinct from issues) later led them to examine how President Aquino's own family, the Cojuangcos of Tarlac, were handling the implications of CARL for their Hacienda Luisita. Luisita was the country's second largest plantation and land holding, a huge complex of over 6,000 hectares. To the president's embarrassment, her family's class attitudes were shown to be no different from those of other oligarchs. Like most of the country's big landowners they had used loopholes in CARL to avoid any commitment to major land redistribution. Already, one year after EDSA, Renato Constantino had sounded a warning note in *Malaya's* op-ed columns:

[...] On closer analysis of her latest revelation and her past statements on [the subject of land reform], one cannot but feel that Mrs. Aquino is fast acquiring the rhetorical techniques of Mr. Marcos whose grandiose pronouncements provided enough room for later evasion or reversals of position. [...] The President may be out of office before sugar lands are targeted for distribution to farmers.

[...] It will be recalled that during the [1986 presidential] campaign and her initial days as president, Mrs. Aquino had given a glimpse of her idea of land reform for Hacienda Luisita. In reply to questions during her public appearances, Mrs. Aquino said she believed that reform in sugar lands would take another form. She did not believe in dismembering estates but in a better distribution of the proceeds.

[...] Mrs. Aquino said that Hacienda Luisita is not representative of all sugar lands. She is correct. In Negros, planters are not millers and vice versa. In Luisita, the Cojuangcos [the president's family] are both planters and millers. They own the land which is leased to tenants. Tenancy thus prevails and farm workers are not exactly happy about their lot.

[...] What is clear is that the [Aquino] administration is concerned with the reactions of other members of the landed sector.

Renato Constantino, "Hacienda Luisita", *Malaya*, 13 March 1987.

These misgivings proved to be remarkably accurate, as the Cojuangco's intended arrangements for Luisita gradually surfaced in the press through the early months of 1989. The *PDI's* growing criticism of the Aquino regime's ineffectiveness led it into the attack. It reported the dissatisfaction of CPAR leaders with the deal struck between Hacienda Luisita and its tenants. The hacienda's management, involving Cory's brother, "Peping" Cojuangco, was going to great pains to persuade its tenant farmers to accept stocks in the hastily-formed "Tarlac Development Corporation", in lieu of land they would have become entitled to under CARL. At the same time it was alleged that the corporation was deliberately undervaluing its agricultural assets - and hence the value of the stocks the tenants would receive (*ibid.*). Although legal - but only just - the manoeuvres smacked of expediency, an attempt by the president's

own family to evade its obligations under CARL:

[...] Militant farmers yesterday claimed the Cojuangco family has converted Hacienda Luisita into a corporate entity which will allow its owners to skirt around the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law (CARL).

Trinidad Domingo, an official of the Congress for a People's Agrarian Reform (CPAR) warned the joint Senate-House committee on agrarian reform against possible undervaluation of the Hacienda's agricultural assets that would put its plantation workers at a disadvantage.

The law allows owners of a corporate farm to distribute shares of stock to agricultural workers benefiting under the [CARL]. [...] Domingo also told the joint committee that workers in many corporate farms had been excluded from the process of determining the value of the land and the farm's assets [...].

[Senate-House Joint Committee members] agreed that by circumventing the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law would create [sic] unfavorable public opinion against President Aquino.

("Cojuangcos evading CARL", PDI, 15 March 1989).

Several liberal-left newspapers took up the story, reporting the complaints of "militant" farmers, and Cory Aquino's subsequent embarrassment, with something approaching glee (see, for example, "Luisita accused of bucking CARL", *Manila Times*, 15 March 1989; "Cory kin tops list of landed House members", *MC*, 18 March 1989). The story thus became, rather neatly, a device for pointing up the issues of CARL's general weaknesses, and also the hypocrisy and parsimony of the Philippine oligarchy. The story surfaced again six months later as the stock transfer option for Luisita tenants was driven through by the estate owners amidst allegations of intimidation. Again, the leading liberal newspapers joined in the fray:

Militant farmhands of Hacienda Luisita in Tarlac yesterday picketed the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) in Quezon City to demand a Government declaration of a "freedom period" before a new survey of workers of the sugar estate on the Cojuangco's stock transfer plan is done.

[...] According to the Assembliya ng mga Manggagawang Bukid sa Hacienda Luisita (Ambalus), they want the freedom period to be declared so that they can freely campaign for the adoption by the estate workers specifically of actual land distribution as an option available to them under [...CARL]. During the freedom period, the workers would have access to information to help them decide on which agrarian reform option they want.

[Rogelio Mesa, an Ambalus leader] said his group has also been harassed by soldiers and CAFGU [government paramilitary forces] members within Hacienda Luisita ever since they started campaigning among their fellow workers there about their rights and privileges under [CARL].

"Luisita workers picket DAR office", MC, 5 October 1989.

The issue came to a head ten days later, amidst growing rancour from those farm-workers' organisations opposing the stockshare deal. Again, the *Manila Chronicle* undertook a full coverage, with reports which

included the points of view of radical farmworker organisations, and which showed how an apparently "democratic" process had been skewed:

[...] In a referendum that was bitterly opposed by a member of the Presidential Agrarian Reform Council (PARC), 5,117 workers of Hacienda Luisita voted in favor of the stock-transfer plan, which allows the Cojuangco family to keep the title to their land for at least 10 more years.

[...] The holding of the referendum, which was seen as a crucial test for [CARL], was opposed by Feliciano Matienzo, the peasant sector's representative in the PARC. Matienzo withdrew from the PARC discussions after accusing some members of railroading the approval of the referendum without consulting other council members.

"I would like to point out that what we are facing here (in the Hacienda Luisita case) is a culture of dependency developed over the past thirty years by the Hacienda owners," Matienzo said in a letter dated October 12.

"The farm workers are trapped in a patron-client relationship that completely overwhelms and directs their lives," Matienzo said. "This subservient relationship... lies at the root of the country's land problem. It is the source of social injustice and agrarian unrest."

[...] Before the referendum, the Cojuangcos apparently launched a campaign to ensure the victory for the stock-transfer option. Pat Mariangalong, 28, said they were told by persons close to the Cojuangcos that if they chose land ownership, each of them would wind up with less than a hectare of land.

[...] The referendum was held to determine the farm workers' preferences. But it was apparently meant to back up the Cojuangcos' claim that majority of workers [sic] supported the plan proposed by the family.

Under the stock-transfer plan the Cojuangcos will retain the title to the whole estate until 1999, while the farmers get to own 33 percent of the corporate stocks over a 30-year period and share part of the firm's income.

During the voting at the hacienda, armed guards hiding behind huge yellow-painted concrete culverts kept an eye on visitors and burly barangay tanods in yellow shirts milled around the precincts. Children gathered around a kariton selling colored crushed ice and sticks of boiled camotes [...].

"Tenants opt for stocks in Luisita", *MC*, 15 October 1989.

In spite of attempts to meet the requirements of liberal "objective" reporting, it is clear from these articles in the *Manila Chronicle*, as in the rest of the liberal press⁴, that the paper's sympathies lay with those peasant organisations calling for social and economic justice and *against* the landowners' lobbies bent on obstructing it.

In the same year the "Garchitorena land scam" affair highlighted the propensities for corruption within the CARL. The scam involved the vast overpricing of what was basically scrubland on the Garchitorena estate, by exploiting loopholes in a scheme of "voluntary offers to sell" (VOS) to the government Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR), under the CARL legislation. Politicians and top officials of the DAR, charged with facilitating and monitoring these transactions, were implicated in the scam:

Agrarian Reform Secretary Philip Juico claimed that Sen[ator] Jose Lima Jr. had lobbied for the government's immediate purchase of the Garchitorena estate in Camarines Sur.

Testifying at the conclusion of the joint congressional committee's inquiry on the land scandal, Juico said Lina called him up last December 14 asking that he speed up the processing of the voluntary offer to sell the 1,889-hectare estate for P62.7 million by Sharp International Marketing (Phil.) Inc. [a local company].

[...] In related developments [...] Juico admitted having sent armed security men from the Department of Agrarian Reform to fetch field officials in Bicol [peninsula, where the Garchitorena estate was situated,] who were involved in the deal. But he said this was not to coach or intimidate the witnesses [...]

[...] At the joint congressional hearing, Juico admitted that "there was a conspiracy to defraud the government, compounded by haphazard staff work from the municipal level up, in the Department of Agrarian Reform and other high positions in the LBP [Land Bank of the Philippines]".

Lina's link in the aborted sale would not have surfaced in yesterday's public hearing, if not for some unknown parties who surreptitiously distributed to congressional committee members photocopies of Juico's handwritten note to Gabot [director of the Bureau of Land Acquisition and Distribution (BLAD)]. The photocopies purportedly came from "concerned personnel" of the DAR.

[...] Juico later told reporters after the public hearing that [Senator] Lina casually mentioned that Alex [Lina, Sharp's president] could be his "distant relative," although it is not clear to what degree [- even though they "call each other cousin"....].

"Senator pushed Bicol land buy", *DG*, 15 June 1989.

The congressional committee inquiry on the land scandal went on to reveal that "DAR paid P9M [£300,000] for land offered for P4M [£134,000]" (*Daily Globe*, 16 June 1989). For sceptics of CARL and of the Aquino government alike, the story also illustrated how poorly the administration had formulated the CARL law; the liberal-left broadsheets reported the case in detail, with evident relish.

The uncovering of the Garchitorena fraud gave rise to a rash of other media reports of similar scams nationwide. This is a phenomenon common to the mass media which might be termed the "batch" or "tip of the iceberg" effect: a story periodically hits the headlines with sufficient impact to generate "public concern", which editors exploit by publishing a spate of stories on the same theme. Thus many "deals" now began surfacing in the mainstream press wherein CARL lands had been deliberately overpriced.

Jaime Tadeo alleged, at a KMP rally in front of the DAR offices, that the House of Congress Speaker, Ramon Mitra, and General de Villa, the AFP chief-of-staff, had separately offered large hectarages of "recently acquired" land to Philip Juico, the now-disgraced DAR chief. Nor was this all:

In the dialog with DAR officials headed by Undersecretary Benjamin Leong, officer-in-charge, the KMP leaders also questioned two other deals.

The first involved an offer to sell 7,000 hectares of land in Nueva Ecija by Hermani Manipol at a price of P70,000 per hectare. The transaction has been approved, although a map shows the property is part of the Fort Magsaysay reservation.

The second was the purchase by DAR of a 600-hectare property in Irosin, Sorsogon at P11.49 million, although the peasant leaders said the land is cogonal [sic] and hilly.

"Our list of questionable cases (will be) very long if we are to enumerate it all here. Surely, other cases exist without us knowing yet," the KMP said.

Earlier anomalies exposed publicly by media were the overpricing of the 1,888-hectare estate in Garchitorena, Camarines Sur, the Roces estate in Pilar, Sorsogon and the Villasor estate in Talisay, Negros Occidental.

Agrarian Reform Secretary Philip Juico offered to resign last Saturday amid calls from media, lawmakers and the public for his dismissal.

Also during the dialog at DAR, the peasant leaders demanded full disclosure of all CARP documents, saying the scandals exposed by media were but the "tip of an iceberg". They said public access to the documents was urgently needed since there were reports that these were being "samitized or doctored to conceal irregularities."

DAR officials, however, rejected the demand for public disclosure of the documents. Retired Court of Appeals Justice Milagros German, DAR legal consultant, said there is no law requiring the government to open its records everytime it is asked to "open everything." She said the Bill of Rights in the [new 1987] Constitution is not clear on the issue.

"KMP links Mitra, de Villa to DAR scams", *PDI*, 28 June 1989.

The pro-farmer lobby appeared, temporarily at least, to have gained the moral advantage: the government, in the shape of the DAR and its officials, were now very definitely on the defensive. Yet, as in much media coverage of corruption in the Philippines, there were few long-term political outcomes from these stories. After a decent interval the entire issue was allowed to fade quietly away. The DAR chief, Philip Juico, did indeed resign but little substantive action - such as closing the CARL's legal loopholes - was taken thereafter. The liberal press had, however, at least demonstrated that it was prepared to perform its "watchdog" role where other constraints, such as the conflicting interests of media owners, did not operate.

9.5. The Right-wing Press and CARL: the Case of the Manila Bulletin

The right-wing press *did*, however represent tangible business and other elite interests, and its coverage of land reform issues was markedly different from both the avowedly pro-peasant press like *Malaya* and the liberal-left titles like the *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, the *Manila Chronicle*, the *Manila Times* and the *Daily Globe*. The daily newspaper with the largest national circulation post-EDSA was, once again, the renamed *Manila Bulletin (MB)* - formerly the *Bulletin Today*, owned by the late Hans Menzi. Through all the vicissitudes of Martial Law, liberalisation, the boycott of crony newspapers and "people power",

this newspaper had managed to remain among the leading dailies. Its circulation had suffered badly around the time of EDSA, but it had now recovered its former reputation as the leading establishment "newspaper of record", with circulation figures of around 300,000 (*PJR*, vol.1/2, August 1990, pp. 17-19).

In the post-EDSA period it was generally pro-government, and firmly conservative on issues of law-and-order, of government dialogue with the radical opposition, and of "the communist threat". On the issue of land reform it was generally pro-landowner. However some of the internal contradictions among different Philippine and foreign bourgeois fractions were also reflected within its pages. The *Manila Bulletin* had rapidly swung behind the Aquino government, as the new dispenser of economic and political power. This stance chimed in the main with its advocacy of the "liberalising" and "modernising" fractions of the Manila commercial bourgeoisie. The paper was therefore extremely chary of the effects of CARL on export agri-businesses, and also suspicious of the "leftist" leanings of the "pro-peasant" lobby.

It tended to advocate a cautious approach to agrarian reform; this often allied it at the same time with the pro-landlord lobby. Landowners criticised CARL for being "unworkable": they questioned the availability and sources of compensatory funding, and they alleged that there would be a reduction of productivity, in moves away from the "high-yield" and "high-earning" export crops of large farmholdings in favour of the subsistence rice and maize crops of small farmers.

The *Bulletin's* divergence from the pro-peasant stance of the liberal-left press was already manifest in its reporting of the "Mendiola Massacre" in January 1987. The paper had argued less than a year previously, at the time of the Snap Election, that:

[...] voting for Cory [Aquino] is risky not only because she is a woman, and a woman is known for fickleness, changing her position capriciously and sometimes irrationally, but also because Cory has actually shown a flip-flopping tendency, changing her position on several key issues of the campaign too often.

"Is the Philippines ready for a woman president?",
Bulletin Today, 2 February 1986.

These sexist fears were now forgotten as the *Bulletin* lent its wholehearted support to the Aquino regime, in defence of the action of government troops who had shot at the peasant demonstrators and killed nineteen of them. Although conscious of the "good image" of "innocent farmers" (who had been demonstrating precisely against Aquino's "flip-flopping tendency" on land reform), an editorial in the paper played up the interference by "professional agitators [who] capitalize" on the naivete of farmers; the disturbances, the editorial warned, were "one step towards the destabilization of the government":

[...] The demonstrators called themselves farmers. But if they were farmers why were some of them carrying books and notebooks? How could farmers be so knowledgeable about city ways as to hold out boxes for drivers to drop their contributions in? And if they were truly farmers how could they have been so courageous in a strange place as to challenge the police and the soldiers with pillboxes [homemade bombs] and other similar weapons?

Generally, farmers are peaceful folk. They can be persuaded to demonstrate in Manila only if there are powerful reasons. [...] If for example farmers are suddenly dispossessed of their landholdings, they can be persuaded to march to Malacanang. Even then they will not have the courage to fight policemen and soldiers.

[...] Probably most of them were non-farmers led by professional agitators. Some of them might have been misled farmers and it ought to be the task of the police to find out who asked them to demonstrate.

Cris Icban [editor], "Who were they?", *MB*, 24 January 1987.

Whilst recognising that farmers *can* "be persuaded to demonstrate [for] powerful reasons", Icban seems to overlook that it was *precisely* because farmers had been "dispossessed of their landholdings" that they were sufficiently angered to listen to "professional agitators" (for which read "communists") in the first place. Orlando F. Aquino, the paper's City Editor (but no relation to the president), went further in exonerating the troops and speculating on the causes of what even he recognised as the "worst violent incident" hitherto of the Aquino regime. It should be stressed that both his and Icban's editorials were pure speculation at the time: even the final tally of dead from the incident had not been ascertained (the *Bulletin* had recorded merely "at least 12 persons"). Yet the paper was apparently happy to rush to judgement:

Published reports and film clips of the incident we saw on television seemed to show that the rallyists provoked the violence by hurling stones and exploding pillbox bombs at the anti-riot government troops guarding the approach to Mendiola Bridge. [...] Shots were fired. Then hell broke loose.

To put the blame on anybody on the basis of these reports, to our mind, would not only be the height of presumptuousness but unduly prejudging the case as well.

Orlando Aquino, "A tragedy", *MB*, 24 January 1987.
(Emphasis added).

In the same edition another columnist, Jesus Bigurnia, was more ambivalent about the Manila authorities' claims to unpreparedness for the demonstration, but he remained unreservedly on the side of the "vulnerable [...] law enforcers":

Peasant anger with government had been building up over the past two weeks. [...] Thousands of farmers claiming affiliation with the leftist Kilusang Magbubukid sa Pilipinas (KMP) were being "fired up" by their leaders with incendiary speeches bordering on sedition sometimes. [...] Ministry [of Agrarian Reform] authorities were not exactly ignorant of peasants' intention [sic] to march on and possibly to invest the presidential palace, Malacanang.

When the storm burst at last, government had enough opportunity to defuse the threatened cataclysm. Demonstrators could have been dispersed at any of many points along the long march.

[Yet...] investigators would do well to consider the position of [vulnerable] law enforcers threatened with injury, even death, by inflamed fanatics.

Jesus Bigornia, "Nobody fooled: [peace] talks have really collapsed",
MB, 24 January 1987.

It is well to remember, again, that it was nineteen unarmed farmers, rather than any government troops, who died in the "Mendiola Massacre". Bigornia's op-ed column, like the preceding editorials, betrays inconsistencies and contradictions - between, for example, the authorities being "not exactly ignorant" of "peasant anger" and "intention", and yet somehow "vulnerable", in spite of "many [dispersal] points", to "even death, by inflamed fanatics".

In spite of token (and patronising) reference to "innocent farmers", the *Bulletin* had little time for challenges to the government's position on land reform. Six months later, as the debates grew fiercer, the paper came out unequivocally on the side of the business and landed interests which it had, since its foundation in 1900, always assumed were among its "natural constituency" of readers:

Agribusiness operators forecast yesterday the death of their enterprises once the government's Comprehensive Agrarian Reform [Law] is fully implemented in the next five years.

Most of these agribusiness entrepreneurs are into aquaculture such as prawns and shrimps and into high value export crops such as coffee, rubber, sugar⁵, bananas, pineapples, palm oil and the like.

[...] The big land losers will be Filipino pioneers, big or small, in agribusiness enterprises requiring high technology investments that run into millions [of Pesos] and which employ thousands of workers⁶.

"Agribusinessmen voice concern: see death of enterprises after five years", *MB*, 2 June 1987.

Here are the familiar arguments of big business faced with challenges to its commercial hegemony: on the one hand, its high outlays, productivity, and unequivocal value to the economy; on the other, closures and job losses where business interests are thwarted - with an added nationalist sentiment of "Filipino pioneers, big or small" for good measure. Four days later, the *Bulletin's* op-ed columns elaborated some of these themes:

Whilst most everyone acknowledges the urgent need for social justice and uplifting the great masses [sic] of our people from poverty, many [sic] believe that the solution does not lie in the government takeover of all agricultural lands and their distribution to the landless as embodied in the proposed Agrarian Reform Program.

A Bernard "Nene" Trebol, president of a farmers' association and vice president of the Confederation of Sugar Producers Association, wrote to say that he agrees with the noble intention of the program but it should not be at the expense of the landowner. "Let's have land reform but let's make sure it works for everyone," he said.

[...] "Can the country afford the expected reduction in productivity? [...]" "Will the proposed program actually improve our people's lives by setting them off on their [inexperienced, small-scale] own, whilst dispossessing most landowners of their only means of livelihood? Can this buy us our sought-after peace?"

Orlando Aquino [City Editor], "A trap?", *MB*, 6 June 1987.

Having begged these highly emotive questions - land being far from "the only means of livelihood" for most large Philippine landowners, for example - the editorial concluded in the name of "a Bernard Trebol", clearly a spokesperson for the sugar landowners' lobby: "Indeed, what chance of success has the Aquino government if it now embarks on a Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program covering all agricultural lands? Who stands to gain from such haste?" (*ibid.*)

These two pieces contrast strongly with the points of view being highlighted at precisely the same time in the radical and liberal-left press. Whereas the latter were urging immediate action to avoid continuing social injustice (see, for example, "Exercise in Tokenism", *MC*, 4 March 1987; "Cory Missed the Bus" *Malaya*, 6 June 1987, *quoted in Section 9.3 above*), the *Bulletin* editorials read as empty rhetoric. The "expected reduction in productivity" was pure supposition; "the government takeover of all agricultural lands" under the proposed CARL was, of course, wild exaggeration to make an entirely spurious point: the portrayal of landowners, suddenly, as "victims". Likewise, much of the hectareage of the vast Philippine *haciendas* like the 6,000 hectare Luisita was - and has remained - *underutilised*. This has been precisely the land which traditionally has been some of the *least* productive; it should in no wise be conflated with *smallholdings*, as in the phrase "pioneers, big or small".

To make absolutely clear where the *Bulletin's* sympathies lay, another editorial by Willie Ng, the paper's associate editor, emphasised the landed elite's "natural" ability to manage the Philippine agricultural economy. He began:

With even presidents of government banks opposing the [CARL], chances have improved that President Aquino will no longer sign it and will leave it up to Congress to legislate land reform. For the very objections that Congress will take a long time to enact a land reform law appear to be the best argument why Congress should do it.

"Leave it to Congress?", *MB*, 14 June 1987.

The convoluted rationale for advocating such stalling tactics by the pro-landlord Congress was, Ng argued, that "the CARP provisions are oversimplified to the extent that they would stultify agriculture" (*ibid.*). Instead of "rushing things", he urged studies on an industry-by-industry basis. He took, as an example of why agrarian reform should only be "very gradual", a highly atypical "crop", that of prawn farming which, unsurprisingly, was "definitely not for the penniless tenant farmer. [...] They don't have the resources. [...] And they don't have the know-how. This is a game for millionaires" (*ibid.*). This was special pleading *in extremis*. Two days later Orlando Aquino brought forth a "counterproposal" to CARL in his op-ed column:

Instead of spending all those billions of pesos to buy land that is already owned and developed, why not use the money to open up new lands for the landless farmers to develop with government support and, therefore, add to the productivity of the country?

At the same time, the government can convert all tenanted agricultural lands into agribusiness establishments to be run like any other business enterprise.

"A counterproposal", *MB*, 16 June 1987.

Such simplistic day-dreaming conveniently skirted the problems of where this land would be found in a country with virtually fully-extended land frontiers (and with its few remaining virgin rainforests fast succumbing to the loggers' chainsaws). It also ignored the persistent Philippine patterns of coercive landgrabbing by the socially, economically and politically powerful which had given rise, historically, to the current huge inequities in land ownership in the first place. The real point of this specious nonsense came in the following paragraphs:

In this manner, landowners are not forcibly deprived of their landholdings, the landless farmers are given new lands to cultivate [...] and pernicious tenancy - the root of agrarian unrest in the country - will be wiped out forever.

*With the issue settled - and even foreign investors engaged and interested in engaging [*sic*] in agri-based business here assured of ample government protection - our country can then move forward attaining economic recovery and accelerating development.*

ibid. Emphasis added.

To underline the message of this unrealistic scenario, the writer spelt out the dangers of the proposed Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program which was, he insisted, "highly socialistic and in complete contravention of the free enterprise system enshrined in the new Constitution" (*ibid.*).

Even as CARL was being enacted, the *Bulletin* continued to provide a forum for right-wing critics of reform. They argued that the cost of CARL would be better spent on other sectors of the economy, whilst simultaneously engaging in alarmist rhetoric:

An expert on land reform expressed yesterday fears of "an uprising by the landed gentry" as he criticized the [CARL]. Eligio J. Tavanlar Jr., a former World Bank consultant and adviser to past Philippine presidents on land reform, said that the present stand of Malacanang and Congress on agrarian reform could lead to an uprising by the landowners.

He said the [CARL] is bound to fail because the national leadership has got wrong priorities and concepts. [...] Describing the [CARL] as an ambitious and expensive plan, Tavanlar said that "the CARP [Program] is a lot of crap." He answered questions during a press conference called by the Council of Agricultural Producers [CAP].

[...] Eduardo F. Hernandez, CAP chairman [and large sugar hacienda owner], said politicians have turned their ears deaf [sic] to the cause of landowners. [...]

"Expert warns on [CARL]", *MB*, 5 March 1988.

Once CARL had been enacted, however, the *Bulletin* again swung behind the government's agenda - or "vision", as the paper preferred several times to describe it. In the following months it published a number of "feel-good" stories about the reform programme's successes and general effectiveness:

[...The Land Bank of the Philippines (LBP)] makes available its resources and facilities to as many farmers in the country in the most efficient and practical means [sic] so that the farmers' needs and requirements can be met. [...] Going over their papers I found it very interesting that the bank has developed a strategy to provide adequate agricultural assistance to as many farmers as possible [...]

It made me feel good to know that there are young and dynamic people like Deo Vistan [president of LBP, whom the writer sees "every now and then in the elevator" - the same bank implicated in the Garchitorena scam] and institutions like [LBP] that work effectively to implement the government's vision on agrarian reform. As long as there are people and institutions who intelligently dedicate themselves to making government vision [sic] a reality, then that's what we can call good news. And good news is always welcome.

Zeneida Amador, "On Land Bank [sic]", *MB*, 9 January 1989.

This sycophantic (not to say repetitive) op-ed piece was followed shortly by other evidence of CARL's "benefits":

The government has released P21 million to Tarlac province for the construction of a road in barangay Sta. Rita this town [sic] as part of the support services provided under the [CARL]. This was announced by Agrarian Reform Secretary Philip Juico during a dialogue with farmers and their leaders at a school ground here in the presence of former New People's Army (NPA) chieftain Bernabe Buscayno, alias Commander Dante, and other DAR officials [...].

"P21 M for Capas roads released", *MB*, 18 January 1989.

The significance of "Dante" Buscayno's presence would not be lost on *Bulletin* readers: as the NPA's co-founder, he was by far its most senior surrendee. After surrendering he had been actively co-opted onto a pioneering government "rehabilitation" scheme; special land and funds, including diverted "pork barrel", had been made available in a high-profile government propaganda exercise designed to

demonstrate the rewards of collaboration. As critics had been quick to point out, Tarlac was the province in which the large landholdings of both the Cojuangcos (the president's family) and the Aquinos (her in-laws) were situated (see, for example, Renato Constantino, "Hacienda Luisita", *Malaya*, 13 March 1987). It was also - not entirely coincidentally, since the largest *haciendas* had often been the most exploitative - a traditional epicentre for peasant unrest reaching back to the Sakdalista and Huk uprisings. A number of government propaganda efforts to weaken NPA influence had therefore been focussed on the area since Aquino had come to power.

In contrast to these examples of "developmental journalism" reporting - reminiscent of the newspaper's performance as an uncritical crony newspaper during the Marcos period - the *Bulletin* was entirely silent on the conflictual situation developing on Hacienda Luisita throughout the spring of 1989. It preferred instead to focus on the story of the arrest in Hawaii of Jaime Laya, former Central Bank governor, on charges filed by the US government of his racketeering during the Marcos era.

Likewise, as the Garchitorena scam broke as a major story in the liberal press during June 1989⁷, the *Bulletin* confined itself to a small item, "10 face prosecution in Garchitorena deal" two days later. The issue was only discussed fully in its op-ed columns a week later, and then defensively; the newspaper suggested that private, rather than public, assessment of future compensation claims would be more effective:

As important as it is to ~~949Xpinpo~~ responsibility for the P62 million Garchitorena scam, the joint Senate-House committee [...] must come up with an amended formula for fixing the value of farmland to be bought by the [DAR]. [...] An amateur would have seen that this hilly [Garchitorena] property, parts of it with slopes of 80 degrees, could never be used for farming. [...]

There are a number of reliable appraisal companies which will not do anything to soil their good names. [...] It may be far cheaper to avail of their services than to depend on the "professionals" from the DAR.

Willie Ng, "Need private appraisers", *MB*, 21 June 1989.

The Hacienda Luisita issue had likewise been carried by the liberal-left press for the previous four months in 1989 (see, for example, "Cojuangcos evading CARL", *PDI*, 15 March 1989, *quoted above*). Yet only as it finally came to a head did the *Bulletin* choose to pick up the story; even then it was to feature those pliant tenant farmers in agreement with the Cojuangcos' stock transfer plan, rather than those demanding an open debate of the issue:

Farmerworker-beneficiaries [sic] of the land reform program at Hacienda Luisita have challenged government critics to visit the sugar plantation and see for themselves the many benefits they enjoy after the estate was placed under CARP.

"Farmers cite agreement: Assail critics of Luisita option", *MB*, 1 July 1989.

The story, continued on an inside page, listed the "many benefits" as those already in place irrespective

of the stock transfer scheme, namely health and hospital provisions and subsidised (but extremely basic) housing. Yet the liberal press had cited radical peasant activists explaining that these "benefits" were under threat of withdrawal should the stock transfer scheme *not* be agreed to. This was clarified in a *Daily Globe* report three months later:

Hacienda Luisita farmworkers, voting in a referendum held yesterday, favored heavily the stock distribution scheme as the owner's mode of compliance with the Comprehensive Agrarian Law (CARL). The farm workers were asked to choose between the stock distribution scheme and outright land distribution. But farmworkers who boycotted the referendum charged that the list of voters used in the referendum had been padded with the names of dead persons, non-workers or non-residents.

[...] Most of the [Luisita farmworker] voters interviewed by the Globe said that they voted for the stock distribution scheme, which would ensure the Cojuangcos' retention of ownership of the property, for fear of forfeiting the benefits they now enjoy, such as free hospitalization.

"Luisita workers favor stock plan", *DG*, 15 October 1989.
Emphasis added.

This article makes clear that the "many benefits" were being used by the hacienda management as *negative* pressure on their tenants rather than the *positive* outcome of CARP inferred in the previous *Bulletin* report. The *Bulletin*, far from being the "newspaper of record" of its traditional reputation, was, in the matter of land reform issues, unashamedly partisan and demonstrably manipulative in its championing of the landowners' cause.

9.6. Media Performance and Political Will: Ignoring "Opinion"?

In sum, the *Manila Bulletin* chose to be "economical with the truth", wherever such reporting and op-ed articles promoted the arguments of pro-landowner factions. In general, the paper showed itself to be supportive of government agendas, sometimes embarrassingly so, as in its polemic against political agitators at the expense of victims of government troop repression during the "Mendiola Massacre". It rarely criticised government actions or decisions directly, preferring to lend a positive or at least diversionary gloss to stories which showed the government, its representatives, or the landlord class in a poor light, as with Hacienda Luisita or the Garchitorena land scam. This editorial policy was in accord with the *Bulletin's* traditional conservative position and its mixed urban and rural "AB" upper-middle class readership profile. It could be argued that maintaining a political stance commensurate with the assumed viewpoint of its conservative readership more directly influenced editorial policy than the actual ownership of the paper: Emilio Yap, its post-EDSA owner, was more concerned with his commercial and banking activities than any predisposition on agrarian issues.

Conversely both the left and liberal-left mainstream press, from *Malaya* through to the *Philippine Daily*

Inquirer and *Manila Chronicle*, were more inclusive in their reporting of land issues, presenting the arguments of government, landowners and peasant organisations in a reasonably even-handed manner. Their op-ed columns, however, betrayed their "pro-people" stance, favouring the voices of those representing farm tenants, smallholders, sharecroppers, rural labourers and other rural poor in their demands for social justice.

For a Manila-based press serving an urban liberal "BC1" middle-class readership there was relatively little political risk in adopting such an approach. Arguably the newspaper owners who should have been most predisposed towards the landowners' cause were the Lopez family, whose own wealth was based on sugar plantation holdings. However they had been moving, from the '60s onwards, into economic diversification which aligned them with the more liberal urban bourgeois fractions arguing for increased "modernisation" of the Philippine economy: their extensive holdings in television, radio, power and telecommunications distanced them from the traditional reactionary rural oligarchs. Their paper, the *Manila Chronicle*, consequently adopted a consistently pro-peasant editorial policy on agrarian issues.

A comparison of the respective positions of the *Chronicle* and the *Bulletin* on land issues therefore proves instructive. Ownership patterns on both newspapers were similar, yet editorial positions were acutely different. The decisive factors affecting the *Chronicle's* approach were probably the liberal "BC1" readership of the former, and the Lopez family's increasing distance from its oligarch past as it strove to secure a leading position among the "modernisers".

By contrast the *Bulletin* had always catered to a conservative "AB" readership. Emilio Yap's *parvenu* economic status was, notwithstanding - like the long-established Lopez family's - as a "moderniser". His evident need, to secure commercial allies amongst the landowning bloc and politically useful friends in government, may have influenced the paper's outlook, which remained largely uncritical of both these powerful fractions. Yet it could also be argued that the paper accurately reflected the political views of the elite readership it served.

The Aquino government's timid approach to the land question had exacerbated the bitter historical struggle over land. CARL was not only ineffectual; it revealed the pro-landlord nature of the Aquino regime; and it effectively removed the hope of genuine agrarian reform in the foreseeable future. Reports in the liberal media notwithstanding, the issue failed to mobilise "public opinion" *sufficiently* to pressure Congress for more substantive reforms. Even where the Philippine media were able to fulfill their roles as "watchdogs" and as "conduits" for a diversity of voices, untrammelled by the narrow economic and political interests of their owners, they remained largely ineffective in strengthening democratic forces. This was chiefly because of the dearth of supporting political institutions which would have been capable of pursuing substantive issues which surfaced in the media.

Corruption might be exposed; public opinion on liberal land reform might be aired; yet, because political power still resided with an elite minority with semi-feudal allegiances and interests, such exposures and opinion-formations could largely be ignored at state level. Once "democratically elected" the pro-landlord Congress was no longer politically *obliged* to honour the vague electioneering promises President Aquino had made at EDSA. In rural areas, however, the land reform issue rekindled fierce political passions which had already been sharpened by the patent injustices of the Marcos era. The intransigence of landowners confronting the frustrated expectations of popular rural forces created, understandably, a highly conflictual political atmosphere. It was these conditions and their political outcomes which attracted the media's interest. Relative novelty, sharp political exchange, and large-scale events like demonstrations, are the stock-in-trade of the liberal press, which is only too happy to report domestic conflicts - unlike its censored counterparts in authoritarian regimes.

However, unlike the assassination of Ninoy Aquino and the resultant economic and political crisis which directly affected the middle classes, land reform did not, ultimately, produce urban activists. A longing for economic and political stability apparently overrode, for most urban upper and middle-class readers of the English-language broadsheets, the longer-term structural need for economic and social justice and an accompanying social peace.

9.7. *Conflict in the Provinces: the Road to "Total War"*

There had already been a growing rift between the government and the popular left after the slaughter of Rolando Olalia, head of the the radical KMU union federation, by renegade military officers in November 1986. The KMU subsequently revealed that 20 of its members had been murdered since EDSA (Goodno, 1981: 117-8). The final blow to the government-CPP truce came with the Mendiola Massacre of January 1987. With the breakdown of peace talks, the violence between the coercive arms of the state and the rural sector escalated. Shortly thereafter, in March 1987, Aquino was persuaded by the military to declare "total war" against the CPP and its allies, including the legal left. By 1988 the military's new counter-insurgency thrust in rural areas was in full stride, with the approval of the dominant "hawkish" faction of the US State Department of President Reagan's administration.

Life for many popular groups in the provinces had been growing decidedly more hazardous for some time. Mindanao exemplifies the situation of mounting violence. It had suffered as one of the most violent and politically turbulent provinces throughout the Marcos years. This was partly due to the Manila government's policy, from the Magsaysay period onward, of resettling poor Luzon farmers in what had been, in a mainly Christian country, a Muslem stronghold, never conquered by the Spanish.

The indigenous Moros⁸, as the Muslems of Mindanao have traditionally been referred to, feared that

they were being swamped by Christian settlers. In 1972 they responded by forming the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) to fight for their autonomy. The Tripoli Agreement of 1976, in response to pressure from Arab oil producing countries like Libya and Saudi Arabia, affected to guarantee that autonomy. But Moro leaders felt that Marcos had effectively reneged on the agreement. He had ordered a referendum the following year in which the Christian community in Mindanao - now a majority - rejected it. Thereupon the situation once more rapidly deteriorated, as Moro "rebels" escalated their guerrilla "war of liberation".

Parallel with these developments, multinationals had been granted huge swathes of prime land for export-oriented agribusiness, thus dispossessing many poor Mindanao farmers, Christian and Muslim alike. Parts of Mindanao grew into NPA strongholds whilst others became battlegrounds of the MNLF. The province was suited to guerrilla warfare: it was distant from Manila, and had a high proportion of inaccessible mountainous terrain.

The Marcos regime responded with increased militarisation in the late '70s and early '80s. This in turn created right wing enclaves of local military officers and *caciques* acting virtually as independent warlords. Conversely there were "no-go" areas, particularly round Davao City, the regional capital, where the writ of NPA units and NDF-affiliated organisations prevailed over that of government.

9.8. The Rise of the Vigilantes

Landowners and military officers in Mindanao had begun from the mid '80s, in the critical period of Marcos's demise, to encourage right-wing vigilante groups, which added to the political chaos. The vigilantes were a confused mix of disaffected youth, atavistic and millennial religious sects, rabid anti-communists, and coerced or co-opted local residents. They started, preeminently, in the vast semi-rural, semi-urban sprawl of Davao City. Here, between 1985 and 1987, violent gangs quickly established themselves as fanatical paramilitary forces of repression.

Vigilantism subsequently spread to other areas of major tension, including the Visayan "sugarlands" of Negros Occidental, Panay and Cebu. Here the conflicts arising from the land occupations of the landless, and landlord resistance to reform, were acute. The vigilante movement spawned a variety of other fanatical groups in these areas, including Kristiano Kontra Komunismo (KKK)⁹ and El Tigre ("The Tiger"). The AFP supported many of the vigilante groups with weaponry and funds (CIIR, 1989: 47). At the same time the Aquino administration sought to hold the ideological ground of the populist centre with a government slogan exhorting the populace to "defend the democratic Center against the extremes of Right and Left" (cited in Bello, 1989: 31).

The vigilante groups had arisen initially as a backlash to communist domination in parts of Mindanao and the Visayas. The first vigilante organisation, Alsa Masa ("The Masses Rising"), began its campaign in November 1986 against NPA "tax collectors" (fund-raisers for the NPA) and their strong-arm squads, in the slums of Agdao, Davao City. Here the NPA had secured a communist redoubt in the last years of Marcos rule. US rightwing "advisers" and the CIA were also later to encourage the use of vigilantes as a "bulwark against communism" in a phrase typical of their cold war rhetoric¹⁰.

Alsa Masa and Tadtad ("Chop-chop") became two of the most notorious groups, loosely allied to a third organisation, Nakasaka¹¹. Tadtad had acquired its name through the custom of chopping off the heads and limbs of its victims, but similar atavistic practices were also widespread among the other groups (Amnesty International, 1988: 1). Some of the groups were manned by hoodlum teenagers, armed by the military who "very likely" also supplied them with drugs (Delacruz, 1987: 12). In Negros, they were also armed by sugar planters' organisations¹².

Local people were coerced into joining these vigilante groups. The military not infrequently acted as recruiting sergeants, telling municipal officials and villagers that if they did not set up and join vigilante groups they themselves would be suspected of being pro-communist, and that this would invite appropriate retribution (*New York Times*, 4 April 1987). Lt.Col.Franco Calida, the AFP commander in Davao, was looked upon as the "vigilante's godfather" (CIIR, 1989: 47). He boasted that, by 1988, there were "almost no Communists left in Davao City today, just the priests and nuns - and we'll go after them next" (quoted in CIIR, 1989: 52).

President Aquino actually encouraged the activities of these vigilantes in a 1987 speech in Davao praising Nakasaka's democratic credentials as a "concrete manifestation of people power and as an effective weapon against communism" (*Manila Chronicle*, 1 April 1987). She added a rider that they should remain unarmed, but the military chose to ignore this proviso, as several reports have made clear (Delacruz, 1987: 12; CIIR, 1989: 47). By mid-1987 the number of armed bands was estimated at around 200 (van der Kroef, 1988: 163).

Government support for the vigilante's para-military status was subsequently formalised in 1988 when the much-hated Civilian Home Defence Forces (CHDF) of the Marcos era were, in effect, transformed into a new paramilitary fighting force, the Civilian Armed Forces Geographic Units (CAFGUs). These remained as brutal and irresponsible in liquidating civilians and expropriating their property as their predecessors; indeed, the two forces coexisted for over a year in 1988-9 (Goddard, 1991: 24; Goodno, 1991: 204 ff.). Yet, as van der Kroef notes, Aquino's new "democratic" constitution offered almost no protection against their excesses:

[...] After all, the new constitution provides that, "where appropriate", CHDF and other

paramilitary personnel can also be "converted to regular forces". Such "conversions" indeed have been taking place. But who or what determines the "appropriateness" of conversions? It all seems a matter of current political exigency, or the personal fiat of those in authority, especially local AFP commanders, and the political cross currents to which they are subject.

The effect of all this (in constitutional-legal terms) has been to muddy the waters still further when it comes to the status and future of the private armies and the vigilantes.

van der Kroef, 1988: 167-8

All three government-backed forces (vigilantes, CHDF and CAFGUs) drew on virtually the same type of personnel and, indeed, often the self-same manpower - deracinated, fanatical youths and impoverished mercenary "volunteers". The CAFGUs were theoretically required to have had basic military training, but given the resurgence of local warlordism in the provinces these guidelines were frequently overlooked (Goddard, 1991: 24).

By the late 1980s these right-wing vigilante groups and government-backed paramilitaries were acting virtually outside the law, with fanatical killings and expropriations from innocent peasants, harassment of church and cause-oriented groups and labour organisations, including extensive killings of political activists (Goddard, 1991: 23 ff.; 74 ff.; CIIR, 1989: 85 ff.). According to Amnesty International (AI), victims and their families had no redress. Amnesty recorded that by 1988 not a single military or police officer had been convicted and sentenced for political killings or other human rights violations (Amnesty International, 1988: 1).

This state-condoned terror was compounded from 1988 onwards by the resurgence of the military strategy of "hamletting", first carried out under Marcos. This consisted of wholesale removal of civilians from their villages, which were subsequently fired and razed. Once again, those to suffer most were poor villagers in isolated rural areas who became inadvertently caught in the crossfire of civil war. Mere suspicion of supporting the NPA rebels was sufficient pretext for deadly retributions. The hamletting policy was again to spread widespread misery among the rural population as fighting escalated and internal refugees proliferated. These government policies fed the military's and para-military's potential for human rights abuses enormously. Amnesty International reported that, under the Aquino regime, the incidence of human rights violations was higher than that of the Marcos period (Amnesty International, 1988: 1).

9.9. Human Rights and the Post-EDSA Media

The 1987 declaration of "total war" repolarised social forces, particularly in the provinces. The advocates of pro-popular left-wing reform were ranged against anti-communist reaction and right-wing populism. Reporters in the provinces had often literally risked their lives to file stories against the military and

police during the Marcos years. Yet now they were being told by editors in Manila that their urban readers were no longer particularly interested in human rights violations unless the story was "really big"¹³.

In many areas with a high level of conflict, the military, with connivance from local *caciques*, had continued to remain all-powerful after EDSA. They had few qualms about "disappearing" overzealous journalists: in 1987 alone, deaths of Philippine journalists numbered a record nine, out of a world total of 24 (Reyes, 1992: 133)¹⁴. When journalists additionally found that their provincial editors, and the Manila dailies, were only sporadically interested in human rights stories, their enthusiasm to file them understandably waned. Under Marcos the reporting of human rights abuses by some of the more audacious young journalists had become a major strategy for criticising the regime - and for career advancement in the "alternative" and opposition media. Now under Aquino a career could be better pursued by staying in Manila, on the crime or Malacanang (presidential office) beats.

Yet just at the point when public interest in human rights abuses appeared to be on the wane, the incidence of violations began to increase again. Provincial media connected with the far-right began to initiate or step up public campaigns of harassment against left organisations at local level. Local provincial radio provided a ready medium for this harassment: its staple shows were *tsismis* (political gossip), chat-shows and phone-ins; it addressed local audiences; and it was linked financially to local commercial and elite backers, including local members of the oligarchy and the *caciques*.

It is small wonder then that several radio stations began broadcasting "hate" shows in a style and format evolved on US radio. "Stateside" and "American-style" shows had been a model for Philippine commercial radio virtually from its inception in the 1920s. Under the auspices of "total war", audiences were now invited to "fight communism" by attacking anyone remotely tainted with "leftism", including local people's organisations trying to improve social conditions for poor Filipinos. The "enemies of the state" were identified, on these right-wing airwaves, with all those who opposed the rural elites, the oligarchs, and the military. This definition had by 1987 grown to embrace a whole range of legal left-wing organisations. Prime suspects were those who publicly criticised the regime; the military and police coercion; or the landlords' obdurate stance on land reform. A priest in Bukidnon, Mindanao, where the church had been involved in opposition to logging operations, noted that even to be heard talking about human rights, land ownership, ecology or forest preservation in public was sufficient to be labelled a "subversive", and to be consequently targetted for vigilante attacks (cited in Spires, 1989: 29).

Urban members of the Davao branch of GABRIELA, for example, campaigning for the rights of urban and rural women, were forced to appear on television and radio programmes with "confessions" and signed affidavits, admitting their supposed membership of the NPA. Their homes were subsequently marked with an "X", and they had to evacuate them; despite protestations, they were then listed as

"surrenderees" to Alsa Masa (Delacruz, 1987: 15).

The volatility and arbitrariness of this right-wing populism, and its damaging effects on entire communities, is illustrated by the case of Juan ("Jun") Pala. Together with Alsa Masa and other vigilante groups he was able to harness the media to create a wave of mass hysteria against "communism" and the Philippine left, which started in Davao but spread rapidly to other strife-torn areas throughout the country. Pala was a young radio broadcaster who adopted a populist maverick style under the *nom-de-guerre* "Commander Jun". He claimed to have been a "former NPA sympathiser", but in January 1987 took it upon himself to launch an intensive attack against the NPA and communism in Southern Mindanao. Initially he declared himself and his radio station, DXOW - owned by Radyo Pilipino Corporation in Davao City - to be the "Voice of the Alsa Masa". His conversion to the anti-communist cause was supposedly in response to a grenade attack on a fellow radio station in Davao, DXMF. During the raid the brother of a commentator who had been a vociferous public opponent of the NPA was shot inside a radio booth. The military blamed the NPA for the incident, although the latter denied responsibility.

The station DXOW subsequently became the headquarters for a coordinated campaign led by Pala, armed with handgun and grenades and protected by bodyguards. His key slogans were "Harassment for Democracy" and "Extortion for Democracy". He bombarded the DXOW airwaves with invective against communists, amongst whom he included all local cause-oriented groups, and exhorted his listeners to join Alsa Masa, threatening those who refused with violent retribution from the vigilantes. As a self-appointed "saviour" of Davao City, Pala attacked local governors, mayors and city councillors as "clearly communists". They were ordered on air to resign their posts and surrender to Alsa Masa by tight deadlines, on pain of deadly punishment. Two highly-respected Davao City councillors who had tried to resist Alsa Masa's extortions from the city budget were warned by Pala that they might "find [them]selves on the ground with [their] brains scattered around" (Delacruz, 1987: 18).

In another instance, the entire town of Monkayo was threatened with an "operation" by the fanatical armed group "Remnants of God". Pala summoned up on air the group's commander, requesting him to visit dire retribution on the municipality if "leftist" public officials, from the governor down to three local mayors, did not resign within a month (Delacruz, 1987: 31). Pala also read out lists of barangays suspected of harbouring the NPA and its sympathisers. An entire community of over two hundred souls in Davao del Sur evacuated their homes for fear of a Tadtad attack after a warning by Pala, made on the airwaves "at the request of the armed groups" (Delacruz, 1987: 31). Pala himself boasted of having at his disposal an "armed group of 400 fighters in [Southern Mindanao] alone" (*ibid.*).

He was later invited to a meeting in Manila of CAUSA (the Confederation of the Association for the Unification of the Societies of the Americas). This was a reactionary "humanitarian organisation" serving

as the political arm of the Reverend Moon's Unification Church, allegedly backed by the CIA (Delacruz, 1987: 31). There Pala confessed that the psychological warfare techniques he was using on his radio programme were "inspired by the Hitler experiment" and the "Big Lie" tactics of Goebbels, whereby Hitler had "repeated the lies [against the communists] until they appeared to be the truth". "I am enjoying my game," Pala admitted (quoted in Delacruz, 1987: 31; CIIR, 1989: 83). Pala's campaign was joined by other local radio stations, including DXMF, whose reporters were also armed. Collectively they denounced radical groups such as the labour union KMU, the left coalition, BAYAN, and the left party Partido ng Bayan (PnB). The Davao City local government came out in open support of the radio stations' activities, honouring them with awards for their "promotion of democracy and freedom".

Task Force Detainees (TFD), the church-backed human rights monitoring group, was also tarred by Pala with the brush of communism. Even the church itself came under concerted attack, not only from Pala but also from the government-run news agency, the Philippine News Agency (PNA). Up to this point the church hierarchy had largely declared itself in support of vigilante aims. Cardinal Sin in Manila had endorsed the vigilantes' organisations, which he claimed to see as "purely for self-defense against communist rebels"; the Bishop of Davao Oriental had congratulated Alsa Masa in bringing "peace to Davao City", and the Archbishop of Davao had recognised their "service to the community" (cited in Goddard, 1991: 40).

However, in March 1987 PNA issued a dispatch which was bannered in a local Davao newspaper. This quoted Lt.Col. Calida (the Alsa Masa's "godfather", mentioned above), who claimed to have "intelligence reports that the New People's Army was hiding a big cache of firearms and ammunition at the Carmelite Monastery and at the Redemptorist Church, also in Davao" (cited in CIIR, 1989: 82). It further claimed that 16 Armalite weapons had already been discovered in a Catholic schoolroom by the military whilst searching for human rights marchers who had sought refuge there. The report was seized on by Pala to denounce the local church as a "hotbed of communism" and to call for immediate retribution. The Archbishop of Davao, Antonio Mabutas, came under pressure from the nuns, priests and sisters of the three organisations, now under threat of armed retaliation. He was obliged to issue a meek press release gently remonstrating that Calida must have been fed "erroneous information", whereupon Calida promptly retracted his statement (CIIR, 1989: 82). In contrast to the military's own gagging tactics of slapping libel suits, usually unwarranted, on newspapers and radio stations, there was never any question in this case of the Church suing Calida, Pala or PNA for what amounted to gross libel (and public disinformation). Pala continued rather, from his "radio pulpit", to lead a vituperative campaign against the Church, branding the Redemptorist priests as "Redemptterrorists". He also singled out the Maryknoll Fathers as sharing "communist leanings" (*ibid.*). He tagged the alternative news agency, Media Mindanao News Service (MMNS), on air as a "communist front" (Melliza, 1993: O/T).

Anti-communist hysteria by now dominated most of the local Davao print and broadcasting media. Fear

of Alsa Masa's retribution should any of the media step out of line was probably one consideration in their collaboration, though, given their close ownership ties to local elites, red-baiting by local editors often needed little prompting. In one incident a priest had been interrogated in his car on successive days by a group of 14-year-olds brandishing M-16 automatic rifles. The priest appealed to the City Mayor and complained to the local newspaper. The editor refused to publish his letter, claiming it would only give Alsa Masa more grounds for criticising the clergy (cited in Delacruz, 1987: 19).

Media hysteria continued to build in Davao. It climaxed around the exhumations of alleged victims of the NPA, which by 15 March 1987 were claimed to number 71, all unearthed on information supplied by Alsa Masa. The campaign culminated in a garish funeral march for 113 exhumed corpses through Davao City's main streets on 25 March. Although certain Davao and Manila newspapers described it as "macabre", the propaganda effect of the march was also hailed as "a master stroke of publicity". One columnist wrote:

Whoever thought of parading all those dead [...] is a genius. [...] Foreign journalists filmed the entire funeral march and the ceremonies that followed. Media-men from Manila flew here to see what the event was all about.

cited in CIIR, 1989: 82.

The NPA's spokesman for its Southern Mindanao Command wrote an open letter to the press claiming that many of the victims paraded in this unseemly fashion had in fact been members of the NPA, betrayed by military deep penetration agents and "stockpiled at the Philippine constabulary barracks". He denounced the accusations against the NPA as "an obnoxious lie" (ibid.: 81-82).

Certainly the military's claims raised questions as to what had become of the bodies from their own "salvagings" of NPA rebels and suspects. The NPA claimed that the mass graves had been so easily located precisely because they were those of NPA victims "salvaged" by government military and paramilitary forces (ibid.). However the full implications of the "story" were a good deal more complex than the simple claims that were made at the time by either side.

9.10. Disarray among the Left

Resulting from "a turbulent doctrinal struggle within the [communist] party", sections of the Davao NPA, it was later revealed, had moved to step up their insurrectionary tactics around the time of EDSA ("Betting on violence", *FEER*, 17 December 1987, pp.35-7). The Mendiola Massacre and breakdown of peace talks, combined with the left's generally poor showing in the January 1987 constitutional plebiscite and in the May 1987 congressional elections, may have strengthened the hand of these pro-insurrectionists. The "urban struggle" was also "intensified"; one urban partisan group, the Alex

Boncayao Brigade¹⁵ (ABB) in Manila, trebled in size over this period (*ibid.*).

These partisans, generally known as "sparrows" in the local press, declared a war of "revolutionary justice" against vigilante groups. This was to climax later, on 2 August 1987, when they "almost certainly" killed local government secretary Jaime Ferrer "despite an ABB disclaimer" (*ibid.*). Ferrer had been a vociferous public advocate of vigilantism. On 28 October another NPA partisan group killed three low-ranking US servicemen from Clark Air Field, thus carrying out the NPA threat to target "all US military and civilian advisers" involved in "the interventionist policy of the Reagan administration" (cited in *ibid.*). NPA guerrillas also expanded their activities to embrace economic sabotage, including the demolition of bridges, railways, radio transmission towers and refinery pipelines (*ibid.*). In the provinces, the so-called "Mindanao faction" favoured the expansion of the aggressive tactics they had adopted there over the previous decade.

Yet it was precisely this expansionist strategy of urban insurrection which led to an overstretched guerrilla network, lax recruitment procedures, consequent deep penetration by AFP agents (DPAs), and resultant paranoia by local NPA cadres and leadership ("The Coming Storm in Mindanao", *Midweek*, 10 June 1987, pp.5-6). This culminated in a substantial "weeding out" of suspected "traitors", the majority of whom were probably entirely innocent of any betrayal of the NPA. An estimated 600 to 900 cadres were reported to have been executed in Mindanao by 1987 in an effort to flush out AFP agents in this way (Bello, 1992: 147).

This internal bloodletting was a propaganda gift for the military. Even supporters of the left were aghast as the details began to emerge in the press (Carolyn Arguellas, "The Antongalon [Mindanao] Incident: Are the [NPA] Rebels Really Killing Their Comrades?", *Veritas*, 30 September 1986, pp.15-16. Cited in Abinales, 1992: 44). This "madness", as the CPP leadership itself later characterised the purges, was symptomatic of deeper rifts within the movement. "Sharp debates" had surfaced within the CPP of the relative importance of the armed and political struggles on the one hand, and the "united front" organised around the NDF on the other (Abinales, 1992: 52).

These debates evolved from the end of the Marcos regime through the Aquino era and resulted in a number of drafts of the NDF programme, notably in 1985 and 1988, and a "final" draft for the NDF's 1990 congress (Rocamora, 1992: 9; 18 ff.; 29). Rocamora has pointed out "authoritarian elements" in the 1985 draft, for example on proposed constraints on academic freedom and the encouragement of "social realism" in the arts, and the much more substantive question of the respective roles of the CPP and the NDF in a future "revolutionary" government (*ibid.*: 22). These elements were still being debated in the 1988 draft and in the "final" 1990 submission (*ibid.*: 24). However a rift was apparently already opening after EDSA and the breakdown of peace talks with the government. This was essentially between the CPP's founder and chairman, "Joma" Sison and those he castigated as "revisionists".

Sison maintained a largely orthodox Maoist approach to revolution, that of "protracted people's war". This strategy had been modified to accommodate local conditions, in the geographically-fragmented Philippine archipelago. Thus the CPP's policy of "centralized leadership and decentralized operations" granted local NPA leaders considerable autonomy in the daily prosecution of guerrilla activities (Abinales, 1992: 35). Yet the Maoist doctrine of "encircl[ing] the cities from the countryside" had remained a cornerstone in Sison's own thinking.

This doctrine had been sporadically challenged within the CPP's leadership from the late 1970s onwards (subsequent to Sison's imprisonment by the Marcos regime). The CPP's boycott of EDSA had led to its consequent side-lining in the euphoria of the "people power revolution", which Cory Aquino and her supporters had been able to claim exclusively as their own. The CPP election boycott had been subsequently recognised as a tactical debacle. Now, leading lights in the party¹⁶ were beginning to advocate a more "pluralistic" approach, embracing diverse tactics including urban insurrection, "critical support" of the Aquino government, and "popular democracy". This last might include coalitions of "progressive forces" in a reinvigorated united front (cited in Abinales, 1992: 52).

Whereas Sison urged a "return to basics", through renewed "rectification" of the CPP's programme and a reaffirmation of "the leading role of the working class" (Liwanag [Sison], 1992: 82-133), the "revisionists" criticised "Stalinist" tendencies within the CPP, advocating instead "socialist democracy" and a mixed economy (Rocamora, 1992: 36-7). They suggested that factions of the CPP, the advocates of "Leninist vanguardism" and "centralized democracy" including Sison himself, were perhaps less interested in cultivating democratic structures than in the end goal of attaining political power ("Ka Barry" [*nom-de-guerre*], 1992: 82-141). This "turbulent doctrinal struggle" was paralleled by the arguments between advocates of a more aggressive NPA strategy, particularly intensification of urban insurrectionary tactics, and those who, like Sison himself, counselled for a consolidation of the CPP's position in the countryside.

From this point onwards the CPP-NDF began to lose many of its sympathisers among the urban middle-class and rural peasantry. The rift, as it became increasingly public, presented a propaganda initiative to the right, who were able to point not only to "internal divisions" within the NPA but also the "atrocities" committed by them. With public attention thus temporarily diverted, the far more substantial human rights abuses of government forces could be played down (Bello, 1992: 152).

Whatever the truth might have been, therefore, about the real provenance of the corpses paraded at the Davao mass funeral in March 1987, the "master stroke of publicity" of the funeral itself caught the public imagination. The media hysteria it fuelled was effective, both in the short term, in recruiting Alsa Masa members, and strategically, in polarising the community.

9.11. *The Propaganda Initiative: the Military and the Media*

How effective was pro-government propaganda in the mass media during the period which led into the phase of "total war" against the communists? Ranged against each other in increasing enmity were the state and its critics. The state had either co-opted, or rallied to its cause, populist groups of the right dedicated to defending at all costs "the gains of EDSA" - a return to the *status quo ante* in favour of the oligarchy. The state's critics appeared to have lost the political initiative for change, whilst the economic and social ills they championed remained, or became more acute.

Self-styled "anti-communist", "pro-democracy" and "pro-vigilante" groups, including frightened residents - many bullied into acquiescence by the coercion of the vigilantes - opposed with brutal terror, threats of violence, and black propaganda the forces of both the armed left and the legal cause-oriented popular organisations. These latter two groupings, as we have seen, were now being indiscriminately branded by the military and right-wing media as "anti-democracy" and "anti-government". According to the independent Philippine Alliance of Human Rights Advocates (PAHRA), the military's "intense propaganda" in the media had "succeeded in whipping up anti-communist hysteria [...] to set the stage for its counter-insurgency operations and to dull reactions against human rights violations [which] it continue[d] to commit" (cited in "The Violent Menace", *Midweek*, 3 June 1987, p.14).

UP Professor Maris Diokno, chair of the National Movement to Disband Vigilantes (NMDV)¹⁷, expressed the misgivings of several concerned Filipinos¹⁸ when she alluded to the "frightening parallel" between the experiences in the Philippines and certain Central American countries during the same period. President Reagan's common strategy of "Low Intensity Conflict" was, she feared, to "civilianize counter-insurgency and militarize the grassroots. [...] This] encouragement of vigilante groups has a lot to do with what the US [also] wants to happen here [in the Philippines]" (*ibid.* p.16). A fact-finding mission to the Philippines headed by former US Attorney General Ramsey Clark, whose members included an ex-CIA officer, endorsed this view. It reported to the US government that:

[...] Through [its] long-term media build-up [...] the CIA initiate[d] an entire series of operations designed to raise the levels of anti-Communism to a hysterical pitch. [...] Fake Communist atrocity stories, [and] details of a Communist blood bath following a Communist victory, all broadcast by a co-opted media [...] have] generate[d] the proper panic allowing for the adoption of repressive legislation and operations.

cited in CIIR, 1989: 84.

The Pala episode ends with an ironic postscript. "Jun" Pala with his various vigilante cohorts had, through his virulent radio broadcasts, contributed substantially to the conditions for mass terror in Davao - and a pattern of unconstrained vigilantism over large tracts of the Visayas. He then apparently underwent a change of heart. In June 1987, only three months after the mass funeral in Davao and the apogee of Alsa Masa's recruitment drive (to 3,000 members), Pala supposedly grew disenchanted with

Lt.Col.Calida and went on to form his own "Contra Force" vigilantes. He now talked of "independent social democracy", claiming his political stance was "left of center" (cited in van der Kroef, 1988: 176-7). By May 1988 Pala and his Contra Force were rallying against "US imperialism" as symbolised by the US military bases: he even adopted the propaganda slogans of his former adversaries, the KMU trade union federation (*ibid.*). This *volte face* illustrates, if nothing else, the blatant opportunism of Philippine political life, which under Cory Aquino came to embrace even the rivalries of local military and vigilante warlords and their populist appeals.

The Pala case raises two interesting questions. By whom was he funded? - he boasted at one point of having 1.3 million pesos (\$60,000) for his "crusade" (cited in Delacruz, 1987: 31). And how could he maintain immunity for his blatantly extra-legal activities, including incitement to murder and gun-toting in public, over a period of several months?

The evidence for (covert) funding points strongly towards the CIA or its Philippine surrogates within the local AFP Davao Military Command (Delacruz, 1987: 31). This, it will be remembered, was headed by Lt.Col.Calida, the declared supporter of Alsa Masa and vociferous opponent of communism. The second question, of immunity before the law, then broadens into the realities of military complicity in the arming of the vigilantes, and in their encouragement of the campaign to terrorise the civilian population.

An incident in metropolitan Manila illustrates how deeply the vigilante model of terror had penetrated the political fabric of the country. During the funeral of a police officer in mid 1987, attendant police officers displayed placards denouncing supposed "communists". Among the list was Dr.Nemesio Prudente, a former Marcos detainee, and then currently president of a state university which it was rumoured was harbouring "leftists". Several days later Prudente was ambushed by unidentified gunmen. Like an ayatollah's *fatwa*, the police had needed only to display the placard "Kill Prudente"; anti-communist groups were happy to accomplish the rest (CIIR, 1989: 55).

A Philippine Senate Committee heard from its own fact-finding team that the bearing of firearms was not even monitored by the military, then or later. Although firearms larger than .45 calibre could only be legally sanctioned by the military, television and newspaper pictures consistently portrayed vigilantes with large firearms. Where the military did not actively supply these arms they clearly condoned their use, and were keen to publicise in the media their general approval of vigilante actions. These were described in glowing terms by the right-wing press as "people power in action" and "supporting democracy" (cited in Delacruz, 1987: 31). Contrast these sentiments with the military's vehement opposition to all reports of human rights abuses by the military and paramilitary forces, both during the Marcos era, and later when the Aquino regime's "total war" was in full swing. There is no doubt that the media's reports of pro-vigilante strategies of terror contributed to the steep re-polarisation of

Philippine society after EDSA (CIIR, 1989: 51). For opposition forces to survive politically after EDSA there was clearly an urgent need to present in public an alternative case.

Endnotes to Chapter Nine

1. IBON calculated that a further 5.7 million people joined the ranks of the poor during President Aquino's term of office (IBON, 1992 (a): 2).
2. This development has focussed since the early 1990s on the so-called "Calabarzon land conversion project" involving swathes of farming land in the provinces of Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal and Quezon. The land been designated by the government for "agro-based industrialisation", with state-built transport infrastructures, EPZs and industrial estates. The combined population of this area in 1993 was 8.3 million, or 13.3% of the country's total population (Source: "Industrializing the Countryside or Undermining Agriculture? The Calabarzon land conversion project", Philippines Development Briefing, no.4, February 1993).
3. The terms CARP (Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program) and CARL (Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law) have been used virtually interchangeably in Philippine reports.
4. The *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, *Daily Globe* and *Manila Times*, amongst others, filed similar reports.
5. The international price of sugar had halved the previous year, but the sugarlandowners' lobby was notoriously obdurate in the face of up-to-date figures showing the steep decline of their industry!
6. Most of the above-named crops provided only sporadic, seasonal, low-waged work, as Constantino had pointed out - *see above*.
7. For example, "Senator pushed Bicol land buy", *DG*, 15 June 1989, *quoted above*; see also: "Garchi-type scandal uncovered in Negros", *PDI*, 16 June 1989 and "CARP lands overpriced, peasant leader charges", *PDI*, 25 June 1989.
8. Originally the Spanish term for (Arabic) Moors.
9. "Christians against Communism".
10. Retired Major Gen, John K. Singlaub, a member of the US right-wing Special Warfare Advisory Group entered the Philippines along with CIA agents in May 1987 to urge right-wing Filipino politicians, business men and military officers "to organize vigilante groups to protect themselves from communism". Former US Attorney-General Ramsey Clark noted that similar counterinsurgency techniques had been employed by the CIA in Nicaragua and Vietnam (Report by US lawyers' fact-finding mission, cited in KMU, 1987: 9; and Sussman, 1990: 41).
11. The misnamed Nagkahiusang Katawhan Alang sa Kalinaw ("People United for Peace") or Nakasaka, based in Davao del Sur.
12. The Sugar Development Foundation Inc. (SDFI), funded by "liens" paid by sugar planters, supported the paramilitary Philippine Constabulary Forward Command (PCFC). Between 1986 and 1989, 34 NFSW workers were "salvaged", four were "disappeared", and 210 illegally detained, according to Serge Cherniguin, NFSW vice-president (*Daily Globe*, 1 June 1989).

13. This information came to me from interviews with several provincial journalists, in the Visayas and Mountain Province, Luzon, who had been directly involved in attempts to report such stories during the post-EDSA period.
14. The Philippines "topped the international listings of journalist [deaths] three times under the Aquino administration" - in 1987, 1988 and 1990 (Reyes, 1992: 133).
15. Named after an earlier CPP martyr.
16. These included figures who had been central to the CPP-NPA-NDF's original formation in the late 1960s: "Kumander Dante" (Bernabe Buscayno), peasant leader and founder of the NPA; Ed de la Torre, a former priest turned NDF leader; and Horacio "Boy" Morales, also a former head of NDF.
17. She is also daughter of Jose Diokno, the late senator and human rights lawyer, who was one of Marcos's staunchest and most principled opponents.
18. These included the internationally-renowned Philippine filmmaker, Lino Brocka, and fellow UP professor, Ed Garcia.

10. CHAPTER TEN. CHALLENGES TO THE HEGEMONY

10.1. Introduction: Media and the Counterhegemony

One of the media's important tasks in a democracy is to inform their audiences and readers of the political contexts, and possible alternative interpretations, surrounding important issues. If the electorate is to be encouraged to make informed choices between genuinely alternative political programmes, and to engage in the debates germane to political decision-making, then this media role should also adopt a critical stance to the dominant hegemony. It should challenge the apparent "transparency" of "commonsense" ideologies to reveal the underlying social, economic and political interests of those advocating them. This chapter examines challenges to elite hegemony in the Philippines since EDSA, particularly those which have originated with the alternative agendas of the politically "marginalised"¹. It analyses a number of strategies to articulate these agendas through the media; assesses their political significance in the light of political outcomes; and charts the reactions they have encountered, including responses by economic and political elites.

The need for media conduits of political exposure and critique is particularly acute in Third World countries. This is because the state is often governed and controlled by those who habitually seek to make decisions and political pacts in secret, and to exclude or manipulate popular opinion. Where the ruling elites represent a narrow band of class interests, and democratic checks on them are often rudimentary, elites often assume that they can exclude others from decision-making processes with impunity. It may be argued that these assumptions are also often made by elites in the developed world. A major difference between many First and Third World states, however, is that recourse to coercion is not infrequently a matter of first rather than last resort in countries where elites can either ignore or manipulate the outcomes of the ballot box. Conversely, as Miliband (1994) has written, an enlargement of democratic rights occurs only through "constant pressure from below", because "the vast majority located at the lower ends of the social pyramid needs these rights [...] to resist and limit the power to which they are subjected" (Miliband, 1994: 4; original emphasis).

Applying this need for rights to the Philippine media's potential role in the nation's democratisation, we may pose the question: what are the dynamics for the possible voicing out of those agendas which might benefit "the vast majority" of the Philippine populace? Under what circumstances can alternative media conduits evolve to represent and articulate non-elite voices? This chapter examines the need of the politically marginalised to create access, both to the mainstream media and to alternative conduits of information. It looks specifically at attempts by certain groups of journalists, and others, to establish such alternatives. These include news agencies, centres for investigative journalism, and informal networks

with NGOs and POs which produce their own "micro" media, to "voice out" not only minority, but also majority, concerns which might not otherwise be aired in the mainstream media.

After EDSA the majority of the "mosquito" newspapers and their journalists, having helped substantially to rally opposition against Marcos, were either absorbed into the mainstream press, or driven out of business by "market forces". In spite of the decline of the "mosquito" press, new alternative media networks were formed or strengthened among cause-oriented people's organisations, during the troubled years of the Aquino regime's "total war" against communism from mid-1987 onwards. These formations were partly in defence against the violent, not to say deadly, attacks upon left movements and their supporters which were launched by the military, police, paramilitaries and right-wing vigilantes. The "total war" had spread to embrace not just the activities of the extra-legal left of the CPP and its allies, but also many perfectly legal left and cause-oriented organisations.

In order to explore the economic, social, political and organisational constraints which have operated on such groups, the chapter examines the outcomes, both in reporting terms and politically, of a select number of popular campaigns with which the media have been involved. The chapter concludes with a description and analysis of certain economic constraints affecting the rise and fall of an exemplar of the "critical press" during the Aquino era. These constraints have affected many alternative media in the post-EDSA period, and may in part explain the practical difficulties surrounding challenges to the dominant ideology embedded within the mainstream media.

10.2. Advocacy Journalism and Alternative News Structures

Throughout the '80s civil networks were formed to address issues and problems which government had either ignored or would otherwise have settled in accordance with elite interests. There seemed after EDSA - certainly at the level of NGO and PO activity - to be a growing popular confidence in making heard the voices of those normally excluded from formal political decision-making. Keane (1992) has described how alternative communication networks are important, not only to counteract political exclusion by elites, but also because

[...] they indicate ways in which new forms of social solidarity, especially among the less powerful citizenry, can be developed against the atomizing effects of modern life. Communicative networks can help to offset the tendency of the mass media to pile discontinuity on to us, to wash away memories, to dissolve and fast-cut, to throw away yesterday's papers.

[...] Finally, communication networks developed "underneath" and "beyond" the structures of state power - so-called bush telegraphs - have important potential for empowering citizens. [...] They cultivate the virtues of democratic citizenship: prudence, judgement, eloquence, resourcefulness, courage, self-reliance, sensitivity to power and common sense.

Keane, 1992: 31.

Keane notes that localised networks can also be instrumental in overcoming the isolation of parochialism. They can stimulate the awareness that even large-scale organisations like state bureaucracies and capitalist corporations rest ultimately on "molecular networks of everyday power relations", which may be susceptible to transformation through pressures from below (*ibid.*). Above all, such communication networks, in the Philippines and elsewhere, seek to analyse current and past failures of economic and political development, and to present alternatives. It is also worth noting that there is a substantive difference between the "advocacy" or "campaign" journalism often found in the "micro" and "alternative" media, and the liberal pluralist model of the mainstream mass media which emphasises "balance" and "objectivity" in its reporting of issues. In the former there is a thrust towards activism and potential empowerment of the audience, compared to the latter's sense of discreet complicity in the *status quo*.

Vanessa Baird, herself an "advocacy" journalist, wrote in a *New Internationalist* editorial in defence of "campaign" journalism. She questioned

[...] the school which holds that what news people have to do is present audiences with the grim realities - and not give them any sense of what could be done to change them. There is a sort of complicit decorum in such journalism. [...] It does not hector or challenge or say: "Hey, it does not have to be that way, and this is why, and this is how it might be different".

New Internationalist, no.261, November 1994. p.1.

Yet if indeed things "might be different", major questions regarding the media and democratisation in the Philippines still remain. Can some of the constraints operating on the mainstream media be challenged or circumvented? What strategies can be employed to counteract the propagandistic tendencies of the elite-controlled mass media, interested mainly in preserving their own agendas of hegemonic control?

As Gramsci pointed out, there exists a popular worldview which draws on everyday experience. This runs parallel and sometimes counter to the imposed, dominant hegemony of the ruling class, and remains critical and even resistant to it. This counterhegemony, Gramsci maintained, has the potential, as a contested area of struggle, to change the *status quo* through conscious and organised resistance. The "organic ideology" experienced by the subordinate classes and evolved by its own intellectuals, should have the capacity to inspire in them concrete attitudes of resistance and a consciousness of deeper realities. These "conscientised" attitudes might consequently lead to action and the eventual transformation of society (Gramsci, 1971: 377). Yet Gramsci also pointed to the danger of "passive revolution" by the bourgeoisie, whereby radical change would be absorbed through piecemeal reform or compromise; in this way challenges to the dominant hegemony could be neutralised or co-opted (Gramsci, 1971: 160 ff.). To counter such bourgeois annexation Gramsci's revolutionary praxis embraced not only contingent or "conjunctural" organisation, of the type favoured by the Leninist-style "cadre party", but also long term "organic" struggle for hegemony through "moral-intellectual" or

pedagogical tasks (cited in Boggs, 1984: 262).

A Gramscian framework may be useful in analysing processes of change within the Philippine media. It may be possible to discern signs in the Philippine "micro" and "alternative" media, for example, of a developing "counterhegemonic culture". This has been nourished by alternative strategies for establishing more substantial and responsive democratic forms, beyond the frequently empty formalism of Philippine electoral politics.

10.3. "Watchdogs" and the "Public Interest"

The essential key to making any sense of news events as reported in the mainstream press is background contextualisation. Yet it is precisely this essential element which is most often absent from the average news report of a mainstream newspaper or broadcast. There are several reasons for this. On the one hand are "professional" or "organisational" practices, frequently determined by economic considerations, which affect length, style, and format. Entman (1989) sums up these constraints as "economic pressures [which] shape the values that guide the creation of news - brevity, simplicity, predictability, timeliness" (Entman, 1989: 19). On the other hand are political forces which reinforce hegemonic control by elite actors, limiting the agendas which gain access to the media, the sources of information used, and consequently the scope for interpretation of "events" and their underlying processes:

[...] The supply side of the journalist's dilemma [of dependency on elite sources] is that most of these convenient and logical sources have a stake in what is reported. News reports can advance or undermine the policy proposals [which these sources] want enacted or privileges they want maintained. The information they provide is tainted.

Entman, 1989: 19.

In such an environment, independent and critical analyses are frequently the first casualties. Investigative reports may be launched in the mass media with "public interest" enlisted as a potentially persuasive ally. It may be the case however - in developed nations as in developing ones - that what parades as "public interest" in a news story is in fact class interest. "Public interest" is often assumed to be co-terminous with the hegemonic interests of the elite classes. This is particularly the case with those class fractions united by fairly uncritical acceptance of the dominant capitalist agendas - and with ready access to the mainstream media. Because they are disproportionately represented among media practitioners, middle class reporters and columnists may be inclined to identify their "watchdog" and "whistle-blowing" functions, uncritically, as being "in the public interest". As we have seen, their bosses, the press proprietors, condone and even encourage these functions: critical stories are used primarily as weapons against elite rivals, and also as "infotainment" which may improve circulation figures.

Yet the "watchdog" role may also on occasion serve the middle-class interests which journalists themselves share - as a means to challenging the elite hegemony. Where "whistle-blowing" reports expose the exclusionary strategies of the ruling classes, they may even help to mobilise popular majority forces. Reports of human rights violations by the military, and endemic corruption among Marcos cronies and government agencies in the latter years of Marcos's rule helped to demonstrate how unaccountable his authoritarian regime had become - and to fuel thereby the debates of the "Parliament of the Streets".

In an attempt, therefore, to combine the traditional media "watchdog" role with more radical critiques and contextualisations of current issues - which they felt were necessary to make better sense of "the news" - various Philippine journalists have set up alternative networks of news information and investigative journalism. Some of these networks have developed into robust news-reporting and fact-finding agencies, albeit with a residual financial dependency on outside, usually international NGO, funding. Initiatives have included: a professional Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism, PCIJ, in Manila; an alternative bureau, IBON, which collates and explains "facts and figures" to challenge the government's own selective statistics; and PNF, an alternative news agency with extensive provincial networks.

10.4. Case Study: the Alternative News Agency, PNF

This section surveys the achievements of one alternative media conduit in the Philippines; describes obstacles to its progress; and finally analyses its contribution to democratisation. Investigative journalism often provides a powerful instrument of analysis and contextualisation of the news, by providing clues to the underlying structures within which the foreground news of events and personalities operate. It is consequently one area of the media where it is possible to give alternative opinions, and to make explanatory linkages between apparently "inexplicable" and disjointed "events".

Philippine News and Features (PNF) emerged as one such provider of "alternative news". Initially it arose from the wish, in 1984, to present an ecumenical church voice in the media, through a newly-established publishing arm called Crossroads Publications Inc (CPI). CPI's board of directors included representatives from the more radical religious orders, including those Redemptorists and Maryknoll priests and sisters whom Jun Pala had condemned as "communists". It was the Maryknoll fathers in Davao del Norte who had initiated the "conscientising" Basic Christian Communities (BCCs) throughout Mindanao in the late 1970s.

CPI's immediate aim was to protest at the human rights abuses of Marcos's military and to counter "the din of disinformation being perpetrated by the largely government-controlled media" (Bodegon, 1990:

O/I). Although its first publication, *Philippine Signs*, failed after ten months (unlike the business-backed, middle-of-the-road *Veritas*), CPI launched PNF in September 1984, "to transmit local [Philippine] news", with a miniscule capital outlay of P.30,000 (approximately £1,000) - just half the cost of a single print run for a newspaper. PNF rapidly became involved in the post-1983 alternative press movement and consequently benefitted from the unprecedented boom that alternative newspapers were then enjoying (Tuazon, 1989: O/I). According to Sophia Bodegon, its editor-in-chief, PNF has maintained an "independent", "alternative" editorial stance ever since, in spite of continued financial support from overseas churches:

Through the PNF, religious groups, human rights advocates, cause-oriented groups and NGOs have found the voice that has always been denied them by the mainstream press. [...] PNF aims to report on vital issues that the mainstream press does not usually write about. These include human rights abuses, ecological concerns, health, science and religion. The PNF would like its readers not just to think but to act on these issues.

Bodegon, 1990: O/I.

A concern to report on the local impact of national issues has led PNF to establish networks with news sources in provincial and rural areas:

We try to link what is going on in the countryside with what is going on in Manila. The people in rural areas have always been marginalised. They don't consume; advertisers aren't interested in them. So how do you get these people - affected by national policies like everyone else - into the national press?

Bodegon, 1993: O/I.

A network has been achieved partly through linking together, in a Federation of Independent News Services (FINS), with provincial alternative news agencies: Media Mindanao News Service (MMNS) in Davao; Correspondents' and Broadcasters' Association - Action News Service (COBRA-ANS) in Bacolod, Negros Occidental; and Cordillera News and Features (CNF), and Northern Dispatch (NORDIS) in Northern Luzon. Bodegon claimed that PNF is "the best-used news agency in the Philippines, even topping the government-run Philippines News Agency (PNA)"; 70% of the stories it offers are published in the mainstream press (Bodegon, 1993: O/I).

Yet one of the agency's greatest problems remains financial viability. PNF must charge competitive subscription rates to mainstream newspapers for its bi-weekly dispatches (referred to as "packets", with up to 11 articles in each dispatch). It has low print overheads - the "packets" are mimeographed. In spite of this it is still struggling financially 11 years after its inception. To make ends meet PNF receives subsidies of up to 60% of its costs from overseas "confidential sources", largely European churches and left-wing NGOs (Bodegon, 1990: O/I). The agency pays its journalists a living wage which compares with starting salaries in the mainstream newspapers. It attracts young committed reporters from the major university media faculties; but inevitably these move on eventually into the mainstream, attracted by

career and income progressions which PNF cannot compete with. Perhaps, however, Bodegon feels they may retain some of their commitment to "democratic values" when they leave. In this sense PNF might be seen as a "nursery" training ground for advocacy journalism, in the same way that the "mosquito" press was in the mid 1980s.

Much of PNF's output is in investigative and interpretive articles; the former have exposed little-known but vital facts about the government and military; the latter have provided "situationers" and "backgrounders", as they are called in the Philippine media, putting into context significant political events and issues of popular concern. Over the last half decade PNF has, for example, provided major coverage of issues such as: the US bases; the insurgency movement in Negros, Panay, the Cordillera (Northern Luzon) and Mindanao; the NDF peace negotiations with the Aquino and Ramos governments; "forced recruitment" to CAFGUs in Panay; oil price hikes; SAPs, and poverty incidence.

PNF environmental reports have included the local effects and international economic causes of logging, coral reef destruction and overfishing; the links between deforestation and flood devastation; and efforts at reforestation, or rather lack of them, by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR)². Human Rights issues covered have ranged through the record of Aquino's regime: torture of political detainees; mass killings and rape by military personnel; children's rights and the abuse of street children. Agricultural and land questions have included an analysis of CARL; rice shortages; and general farming problems ranging from lack of irrigation to pest infestation, and price rises in imported fertilisers.

Bodegon explained PNF's approach to the vexed question, in the liberal media, of "balance" and "ideology":

The important thing is not whether we're "leftist" or "alternative", but whether we come up with important stories that can be verified, and which have the usual news values of significance.

[...] When we started in 1984, for instance, the whole issue of foreign debt was an "underground" issue which couldn't even be discussed openly. People didn't even know what the IMF was. Debt was seen as a "leftist" question. Now it's being discussed at least, by a progressive bloc in Congress.

[...] The mainstream media tend to pick up on stories like the present spate of kidnappings, for instance, and the involvement of the military and police [as members of the kidnapping gangs ...], because it's big money and big business involved. It's rich kids who are being kidnapped for big ransoms and there's the interest - it's quite near home for the upper middle class readership.

But who mentions that this has been going on for over a decade now, since Marcos's time, with poor farmers being harassed and killed, to drive them off their lands, by the military on behalf of rich landgrabbers? None of the mainstream media have talked about this - so where's the "balance" in that? Their concerns are really quite one-sided in fact.

And you can see the same with the land reform issue [...] - it's not seen by the mainstream media as a "hot issue". The government have come up with plans to create 40 or more industrial corridors, and of course that's going to use prime farming land, so it's definitely a land issue, but the mainstream press isn't focussing on those wider implications.

[...] I see my job as a journalist is to show other people what's happening in the country, and to interpret it for them so they understand why it's happening.

Bodegon, 1993: O/I

A survey carried out at UP MassComm³ found, unsurprisingly perhaps, that the editors of all the mainstream newspaper subscribers to PNF's dispatches agreed that, to quote one respondent, "there was an obvious bias towards left-wing causes" (quoted in Perez, 1990: 49). Predictably, too, editors of left-liberal newspapers found "nothing wrong with this", whilst right-wing editors criticised PNF's articles for being "not very well balanced" (*ibid.*). One liberal editor⁴ found the issues PNF covered had once been "considered fashionable by the mainstream press, but not anymore"; he found this "a reflection of the right-wing tendencies of the media and the present conservatism of Philippine society in general". He praised the PNF's "attempt to analyse and explain what is really going on" as a refreshing contrast to the efforts of "the mere glamorised stenographers" of the mainstream media (*ibid.*).

10.5. A Tale of Two Agencies: Propaganda vs. Advocacy

If PNF is perceived as "leftist", it is necessary also to examine the claims of the government-run agency, PNA, to "objective news reporting". A comparison between two similar stories on "natural resources development" from PNA and PNF is instructive. The articles were released within weeks of each other, respectively consigned to the inner "Provincial" pages of the pro-government (sequestered, ex-crony) *Philippine Times Journal (PTJ)*, and the "independent" *Philippine Daily Inquirer (PDI)*. Behind the two stories is a conflict of long standing, between the state and its attempts at strategic energy development, and local opposition to the environmental, health, and cultural costs that it is believed the development projects will incur. The state has been unwilling to hold informed public debates or consultations on the issues involved, except when mobilisations have forced its hand.

The *Philippine Times Journal*/ PNA release reported how two geothermal projects, in Negros Occidental and on Mount Apo, Mindanao, were going ahead with national and local government approval. It noted that President Ramos himself had declared the latter project an "indispensable [sic] component of Mindanao's [electric] power base". Passing mention was made in the article of "oppositors" from local communities; but the manager of the governmental development corporation in charge of the project was quoted as "welcom[ing] NGO monitoring teams [...] to satisfy their curiosity" ("Provincial council okays Negros Occidental geothermal projects", *PTJ*/ PNA, 27 February 1993).

The PNF feature in the *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, by contrast, reported how "almost without exception, local communities where these projects are being built [...] have strongly opposed the projects". The article went on to cite a member of an NGO, the Legal Rights and Natural Resources Center (LRC), who had positive suggestions on how to contest the government plans. Ecological arguments, he said, could delay or halt such developments through court action, and pressure international project funders like the World Bank to rethink its support for them. "Generally, the battle is political, not legal," Leonen [from the LRC] told PNF. He said a strong case and stiff opposition will win the day ("Fight power projects with people power", *PDI/ PNF* release, 13 February 1993).

The two articles are diametrically opposed in their ideology and consequently interpretation of what, on the surface, is similar content. There is, firstly, a professional sloppiness in the *PTJ/ PNA* article: "indispensable" betrays the fact that it has not even been properly subbed - let alone edited - before being reprinted verbatim from the news agency's press release. There is no attempt at the much-vaunted "balance" supposedly required of the "responsible" press, or even at rudimentary background contextualisation. The "strong opposition" to the project reported in the PNF article is minimised by PNA. There is a bare allusion to the project being stalled in 1988 "due to various environmental issues raised against it", but these are not elaborated. The remarks of the government representative who patronisingly "welcomes" NGO monitors "to satisfy their curiosity" pass without editorial comment. Yet it is a matter of record that heavy security fences have ensured that "unwelcome" visitors, including all "oppositors" and tribal dwellers on Mount Apo, have from the project's inception had increasingly restricted access to what was once both public land and sacred ground for the Lumad tribe⁵.

The PNA release is, in fact, a good example of what brought "developmental journalism" into disrepute. The Marcos crony press, it will be remembered, was one of the pioneering government-controlled media of the Third World to employ such "developmental journalism" to justify the regime's modernising programmes. These were invariably undertaken without democratic consultation; they frequently conflicted with the interests and needs of local residents, including ethnic minorities; and they often had tragic outcomes, as in the case of the Chico Dam project (see Chapter Seven). It would seem that, a decade later, under the "democratic" Ramos regime little has changed.

The *PDI/ PNF* article, in contrast to the covert pro-government "developmental journalism" of the PNA, makes its advocacy approach perfectly explicit from the outset, with its exhortatory headline which reclaims "people power" from the government's misappropriation of the term. Here the "democratic conduit" function of the alternative media can be seen at work. Details are reported of complaints against "the country's first coal-fired thermal plant [...which have caused] increased respiratory diseases attributed to the volume of coal ash inhaled by the people". Concrete suggestions are then advanced as to how democratic debate can be encouraged between opponents of the various projects and the state.

Thus in the PNF report the projects are related to local concerns, rather than the PNA's top-down governmental priorities. Equally PNF's commitment to encourage its readers "not just to think but to act on [...] issues" is evidenced at the end of the article, with its clear advice from the NGO representative on the most effective methods of mobilisation. As Bodegon says, "PNF tries to make facts accessible, more popularly understandable, and more relevant to people's lives - that's what makes our work more interesting than the average mainstream newsdesk" (Bodegon, 1993: O/I).

The publication by *PTJ* of the obviously unedited PNA government press release, is an example of what, sadly, is common practice in the Philippine mainstream journalism, especially in many newspaper's inside pages. Such editorial laxity is sometimes excused on the grounds of economy. However a Roundtable Discussion of [Press] Ethics held under the auspices of the Philippine Press Institute (PPI) in March 1993 concluded that:

Owners/ publishers of newspapers first have to "professionalize" the occupation of journalism to ensure that only competent people work in newspapers. Then they have to pay higher salaries to their staff, to remove the temptation to engage in questionable or unethical activities.

"Cleaning up media: Where it should start", *PDI*, 20 March 1993.

The *PDI* editorial quoted figures for the low wage levels of many jobbing journalists: in 1991 some Manila correspondents were being paid monthly salaries of as little as P.1,000 (£33), against a subsistence family income figure of P.5,800 (£193). It is clear that under such conditions the pressures towards professional laxity and low journalistic standards, or even the corruption of "envelopmentalism" (see Chapter Seven), are strong. However, reforms in this area would still not remove the inbuilt "imbalances" - of state, business and advertising constraints - from elite news sources and restricted media access. Such "imbalances" cannot be corrected by the purely technical reforms - wage hikes and "professionalization" - suggested by the *PDI* editorial; counterhegemonic alternatives are necessary. The effective counter to elite "propaganda" is not "balance" between contending elite fractions; it is advocacy of political programmes which would benefit the majority. In a Third World country like the Philippines these are frequently an aggregation of marginalised needs. The problem is to articulate these programmes so that they capture the understanding and imagination not just of a narrow band of middle class newspaper readers, but of a broader popular constituency.

It would be unrealistic to expect the media alone to provide the "organic intellectual" basis for alternative action. The Gramscian "organic struggle" for hegemony needs to be harnessed to political organisations which could unify these majoritarian needs. In the Philippines since EDSA, popular left organisations and movements have instead been beset by factionalism and bitter sectarian divisions. However, incipient networks of alternative media are being formed, and their collective "voices" are at least growing stronger - if not more united.

10.6. Reporting from the Margins

The PNF is only part of a much wider network of post-EDSA "alternative" media, which grew out of its pre-EDSA counterparts, but is no longer tied to the now defunct "mosquito" press of the Marcos years. Sophie Bodegon of PNF and Sheila Coronel of the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism (PCIJ) were both part of the pre-EDSA network which included left and liberal journalists - like Menzi's "troublesome women", for example - who were prepared to challenge the *status quo* in print.

Since EDSA the political focus of critical journalism has shifted. The "underground left" of the CPP and NPA are popularly perceived to be in increasing disarray. Within the "legal left" deep rifts have opened amongst quarrelling factions of the radical "natdems", and between them and their former allies, the "socdems" and "libdems". Representatives of formal political organisations of the left like BAYAN no longer present a clearly intelligible programme to the media. It has been left to "alternative" reporters in the field - mainly in the larger provinces of Mindanao, the Visayas and Northern Luzon - to investigate stories on the issues of human rights, land and the environment which have "cooled" in the mainstream press. There is a useful symbiosis between this "alternative" journalism, and the work of NGO "micro" presses and their NGO editors.

However Sophia Bodegon spelt out the difficulties and limitations in attempting to form such "symbiotic networks" in many rural areas:

There are hardly any roads, or transportation, or telephone lines, and hardly any basic research facilities. And it needs a lot of expertise to do that kind of [field] research. You need basic things like your own transport - unless you can hitch rides - and electricity for your computer. And we [at PNF] don't have enough money for that kind of infrastructure to compete with the mainstream dailies. In any case we're in places where the dailies don't get to.

[...] Then you look at the realities of being an NGO information desk. We did a PNF survey of them and we found that it's most often just one person doing a monthly newsletter, distributing a thousand copies, showing round visitors, doing annual reports, all the writing jobs and organisation that NGOs need. So that person is really overworked.

They come up sometimes with terrible material, and it's such a waste of good will and resources. So we try to encourage them, even if they don't come to us, to go straight to the [mainstream] media without trying to do everything themselves.

Bodegon, 1993: O/I.

NGOs may have the most detailed information about conditions in the field, and sometimes this information is "exclusive" to them. The problem with Bodegon's advice is that without pre-established media contacts they are often ignored by the mainstream in favour of elite-connected "experts". This is how Herman and Chomsky's tight network of "establishment sources" operates to exclude the agendas that NGOs wish to promote.

Yet these non-establishment networks are also slowly being built. Sheila Coronel at PCIJ has been happy to use tip-offs from NGOs for the Centre's stories:

Most of our environmental stories, for example, have a very strong NGO component. We use their materials and guides, much more than ever before. That's partly because NGOs have a much wider reach than government bodies have, and they're now getting credible spokespersons to speak on their behalf. Cory Aquino, to her credit, recognised the role of NGOs that, in a way, legitimised them and made them credible [with the mainstream media]. They're perceived as "advocates", but that doesn't damage them. Journalists know that if they want an alternative view they go to the appropriate NGO.

For example, the Freedom from Debt Coalition [FDC] has credibility because they do original research academically, so they're respected. Likewise for environmental research you go to Haribon, the environmental NGO. The geothermal plant the government's building at Mount Apo has come in for a lot of criticism, for example. That story would never have got into the press without the advocacy of NGOs and their relationship with the media.

The NGOs' own newsletters are of course for a select audience, but they're sometimes useful as backgrounders. And they do keep their select audience updated on recent developments which a general audience might find boring. [...] So what we do is go out there and see if there's anything new in the battles they are fighting.

Coronel, 1993: O/I.

Coronel is speaking here chiefly for the sophisticated Westernised tastes of the urban, middle-class, liberal readership of PCIJ's articles, which are mainly placed in Manila's English-language broadsheets (Coronel, 1993: O/I). The fear of "boring" such an audience is common among the "professional attitudes" of mainstream media practitioners, as is their emphasis on "credibility". Indeed, these points are often argued as a justification of the need for their own "mediating" editorial interventions. Whether the benefits of their sophisticated presentational skills are adequate counterweights to the pitfalls of misrepresentation remains a vexed question. These are the "organisational practices" and assumptions which commentators like Golding (1977), Hall (1977), and Herman (1986), have pointed to as strengthening the frequently unchallenged hegemonic values which the majority of mainstream media practitioners subscribe to.

NGO and union activists have argued that the mainstream press "cannot, with its present patterns of ownership and control, [...] reflect the analyses and points of view of [their] own people's organisations." This view was expressed to me by Carlos Allones, formerly information officer and now chair of the radical union federation, KMU, in the Visayas:

In the mid-eighties the media began to coalesce behind the anti-Marcos movement, but they failed to analyse the root causes of the country's problems. [...] That kind of political analysis and consciousness-raising you can only get, I believe, from the newspapers that the people's organisations produce for themselves.

[...] No matter how diligent [we NGOs] are in reporting the view from below, [...] only very

few of [our] stories will surface unedited in the mainstream press. They always used to say my trade union stories were "too militant", for example. [...] But the mass media could certainly help in mobilisations and the general presentation of progressive information.

However you can see that so-called "progressive" newspapers, like Newstime here in Cebu, have died through lack of a potential readership. Sadly it must be admitted that many working-class people prefer the sensational tabloids!

Allones, 1993: 0/I

The question then arises: *can* cause-oriented and people's organisations counteract this barrage of disinformation and trivia? If political and business elites own and control the mainstream media, can NGOs and POs produce their own information networks and publications?

10.7. New Voices: NGO Micro Presses

In the years since EDSA the new alternative "micro" (or "community", or "small") presses run by Philippine POs and NGO networks have gradually developed their own news-reporting resources and outlets. Although with restricted inputs and limited circulation, these have included periodicals, news-sheets, pamphlets and wall bulletins; NGOs have also created a relatively sophisticated publicity machinery, producing press releases, arranging press conferences and maintaining essential links with the mainstream media. Examples now abound of environmental, feminist, peasant and urban labour union networks, together with coalitions of cause-oriented organisations, which address specific agendas through both "micro" and mainstream media outlets. Their activities include monitoring human rights, and agitating for debt repudiation, labour rights and poverty alleviation.

After EDSA, "micro" media publicity from left organisations was often aimed at NGOs' international contact groups and readership in the West, and through them international public opinion. It became part of the attempt to let the world know what was being perpetrated in the name of Cory Aquino's supposed "democratisation". "Micro" publications are produced - not always regularly - on a quarterly, bi-monthly, monthly, or even fortnightly basis. Titles appear, disappear, and reappear according to funding, staff resources and skills, and the (international) funding bodies' demands for NGO news and publicity. "Production values" - quality of editorial work and contributions, and even of newsprint and graphics - often reflect the level of funding, but also the commitment of a particular NGO's staff and readership, and the popularity of the cause in question. The following describes a tiny sample of what amounts to a veritable plethora of "micro" publications, each with a print run of a few thousand.

Politically the periodicals range from centre-liberal to the radical left. The quarterly *Alternative*, for example, published by the legal resources foundation, PROCESS, has been a mouthpiece for left-of-centre academics, politicians and lawyers critical of government performance. A typical issue, for June

1988, included articles criticising CARL and outlining the liberal agrarian reform bill HB 400, introduced by congressman Bonifacio Gillego, who was also interviewed about its (unsuccessful) progress through Congress. Other issues covered in the same number included Philippine dependency on the US economy, and the US Bases question (*Alternative*, vol.2/ 2-3, January - June 1988).

The monthly publication of the Central Visayas Farmers Development Center, *Plowshare*, has also written about the poverty of rural agricultural workers and peasants. Articles have ranged from reprints of a three-part analysis of "The Peasant Movement and the Challenge of Rural Democratization in the Philippines" by two former communist leaders⁶ (*Plowshare*, vol.1/5, July 1991), to a description and analysis of military hamletting and human rights abuses in the hinterland and mountains of Cebu province (*Plowshare*, vol.1/4, May-June 1991), and the organisation by Negros sugarworkers to combat landlord exploitation and harassment (*Plowshare*, vol.2/7, August 1992). The radical peasant union, KMP, publishes *Peasant Update Philippines*, with articles ranging from an analysis of the obstacles to any effective implementation of CARL to a special issue devoted to the underlying issues raised by the arrest and detention of Jaime Tadeo, the KMP leader, on estafa charges (*PUP*, May 1990).

By contrast, the liberal business Cooperative Foundation Philippines Inc., publishes *The Filipino Entrepreneur* monthly, with news of the cooperative movement, and upbeat stories of successful cooperative ventures in credit, small enterprise production, and agriculture. Given the significance of coconut farming for the Philippine rural economy, for example, an important story here has been the impressive rise in numbers of small coconut farmers organisations (SCFOs), covering 62% of all coconut-producing barangays in 1990 (*The Filipino Entrepreneur*, vol.3/2, December 1992).

The broad-based, liberal-left Freedom from Debt Coalition (FDC), is run from the University of the Philippines School of Labor and Industrial Relations by Professor Leonor Briones. It publishes a monthly A4 newsletter with academically well-researched articles on the economic and political implications and repercussions of the Philippine government's foreign and domestic debts. By using incontrovertibly accurate data, the FDC's newsheet, *PAID!*, whilst being far from an easy read for non-specialists, provides solid, quotable evidence for the ineptitude of many of the policies of successive post-EDSA administrations. FDC and its untiring campaigns to popularise the central issues of debt, trade dependency, and government misspending and planning failures, has provided a useful resource and point of "expert" reference for articles on these subjects in the mainstream media.

Likewise, *IBON Facts and Figures* has produced, from a more radical perspective, fortnightly bulletins on single topics ranging from "The Economy under Aquino" (15 March 1992), and the Philippine Central Bank (29 February 1992), to a survey of the Philippine Broadcast Media (15 July 1992), and multinational agribusiness and land "development", in "Next Stop Cordillera" (30 June 1991). Like the FDC's newsletters, IBON publications are backed by qualified research teams, and their data is often

better collated and more accurate than the government's own research data. They are thus a useful resource with which to challenge elitist or pro-MNC government policies based on spurious evidence.

Also from a radical perspective, the left trade union federation, KMU, publishes a monthly newsletter, *Correspondence*, for national and international distribution, on issues affecting Philippine labour and the economy. An article reviewing the economy in 1992, for example, counterposed the "growth of 0.2%" cited in the *Manila Chronicle* with IBON's figures of "0.48% contraction", to show that the poverty gap between rich and poor, and urban and rural communities, had in fact widened. Another article looked at the record of labour rights and "trade union repression" under the Ramos regime (murder, assault, arrest and detention of union members and leaders by government forces) - and found it sadly wanting (*Correspondence*, vol.7/9, November 1992).

This has been a theme often taken up by Task Force Detainees of the Philippines (TFD) in their monthly *Philippine Human Rights Update (PHRU)*. They have also provided "situationers" on shadowy figures in the administration like Ramos's National Security Council (NSC)⁷ chief, ex-general Jose Almonte ("The Cult of Secrecy", *PHRU*, vol.7/11, August 1992). Another issue was devoted to the Amnesty International report on human rights abuses under Aquino between 1988 and 1991, "The Killing Goes On" (*PHRU*, March 1992). The dire state of the Philippine environment and its implications for human rights and the livelihoods of the marginalised was tackled in a dedicated issue, "For Whom the Gold Glitters" (*PHRU*, vol.7/10, July 1992). An article on protests against the Mount Apo geothermal plant provided a useful contrast with the PNA government news agency's press release on the same subject (see above). The *PHRU* article runs to four pages of detailed narrative, analysis, and photographs tracing the history of the governmental "development" plans for the area from 1983, and the reasons for, and outcomes of, the fierce resistance from the local Lumad tribespeople to the "rape of Mount Apo". There is no question here of political mobilisations being reduced to mere "curiosity", as in the PNA article.

These publications have in common a "mission to explain". They provide the necessary background and historical explanations, necessary for detailed analysis but so often absent from newspaper reports on the same issues. Current affairs periodicals and "investigative" features in mainstream papers do indeed go part way to filling this dearth, but as we have seen there are a number of economic factors which can compromise such articles' "integrity", whilst producing an illusion of "objectivity".

With the micro presses, as with alternative news agencies there is no pretence at "balance". The micro presses are unashamed advocates of their causes; they seek less to "present both sides of the question" than to articulate the viewpoints of the seldom-heard: the victims, the marginalised, the disenfranchised and the dispossessed. Can such an advocacy role remain totally uncompromised? There are now disenchanted voices, not only from the right but also from the left, who question the effectiveness and even *raison-d'etre* of some Philippine NGOs.

The political right is unequivocal: it accuses NGOs of being "fronts", out to undermine the Philippine government's "stability". Blas Ople, formerly a minister under Marcos and now a senator, openly accused NGOs of misdirecting "hundreds of millions of dollars" of foreign assistance funds to "finance various insurgencies, industrial unrest and other divisive activities which, in turn, helped rend our society apart" ("Diversion of Millions by NGOs Eyed", *Manila Times*, 16 May 1994). This accusation appears, on more careful analysis, to be an acute case of "blaming the victim". Social and political unrest in the Philippines is surely engendered by social and political injustices, not the other way around; NGOs and POs have simply contributed to the general "raising of consciousness" of these injustices.

The left's complaints are more subtle. They ask whether NGOs remain, in the 90s, truly advocates for the poor and marginalised; or whether they have become self-perpetuating and bureaucratic, middle-class organisations which have been co-opted by government and have consequently betrayed their constituents (Clarke, 1993; Sobritchea, 1994). One radical journalist critic I interviewed felt that NGO development had "become a huge bureaucracy, and a pretty inefficient one at that - very like government itself. Actually it's been sucked into the establishment and become directionless" (de Quiros, 1993: O/I).

These damning criticisms may have partial validity. The problem seems to stem from the very proliferation - in number, size and scope - of NGOs in the Aquino era. Their range is enormous - as are their aims and politics. On the one hand, many "government-organised" NGOs - those with "official development assistance" (ODA) - have indeed become a contradiction in terms. An IBON article pointed out that these NGOs have often been linked to foreign business interests and even counter-insurgency campaigns (via the CIA and other US agencies). They have consequently become less interested in their role as "people's advocates"; more concerned to dampen social unrest, and "position themselves to receive the foreign funds [that the Philippine] government promised to farm out" - through populist initiatives like President Aquino's KABISIG movement, for example (IBON, "The Many Faces of Poverty", vol.14/17, 11 September 1991).

On the other hand, alongside such "dubious NGOs" are "well-intentioned NGOs which espouse [...] critical collaboration with the government" (*ibid.*). Funded by progressive international aid agencies,

these NGOs engage mainly in small-scale socio-economic projects [...to] kindle people's initiatives toward a self-reliant existence, which is specially helpful in areas far from the reach of government.

ibid.

Others - including self-styled "progressive people's organisations" - have adamantly refused to be compromised by cooperation with government in any shape or form, and remain instead resolutely "pro-people". As the IBON article stresses, "collaboration" by NGOs with government raises "nagging questions". Is this a co-optation of radical movements by stealth, and does such "collaboration" legitimise

"the government's misprioritizations in the eyes of the marginalized sectors" (*ibid.*)? Does the emphasis on "livelihood" schemes move NGOs away from the real political struggles for radical change? In short, can NGOs "collaborate" with an elitist state, and still retain critical and democratic agendas which truly represent the needs of the marginalised majority? It is the debate around these "nagging questions" which continues to divide the post-EDSA Philippine left.

10.8. Advocacy and the Provincial Journalist

In the longer term there would certainly appear to be a danger of the emasculation of that critical, counterhegemonic role of conscientisation, mobilisation and democratisation essential to a Gramscian or Freirean "organic struggle" of "people's organisations". Against this essentially pessimistic assessment, however, should be counterpoised the work of committed alternative provincial journalists who retain links to progressive NGOs. Given the salience of human rights issues for democratisation in the provinces, and the polarising effects of the Aquino government's "total war" policies, it may be instructive to examine the relationship between provincial media practitioners and human rights activists and the reporting of the military's record in the Visayas and the Cordillera after 1988.

I interviewed a cross-section of reporters and other journalists from alternative news agencies and those in the provincial mainstream who maintained networks with "non-establishment sources", such as NGOs, POs and trade unions (see Appendix I). These included Ed Cadagat of COBRA-ANS news agency in Bacolod; PNF stringers and staff like Petro Melliza and Diosa Labiste in Iloilo; Jethro Dionisio, reporter and deskman at the provincial mainstream newspaper *Sun Star Daily* in Cebu City; and Alfred Dizon, a staff reporter for the alternative Northern Dispatch (NORDIS) news agency at the Cordillera Resource Center in Baguio. Each has a commitment to advocacy journalism; each has strong links with local NGOs.

The local NGOs and POs they networked with ranged from the sugar workers' union, the National Federation of Sugar Workers (NFSW), and the Agrarian Reform Alliance of Democratic Organisations (ARADO)⁸, to local branches of the church-backed human rights monitoring group, Task Force Detainees of the Philippines (TFD). The importance of person-to-person contact between journalists and NGO personnel was stressed by Jethro Dionisio, a mainstream reporter in Cebu:

I have friends in TFD, going back to my previous links in Mindanao when I coordinated their bulletins for the Media Mindanao News Service [MMNS]. So I'm always glad to help them now. I've told them, when they call a news conference they should contact me personally, not the news editor. Because if the news editor assigns a different reporter, it will be a different story.

Dionisio, 1993: O/I.

NGOs like TFD have themselves become more alert to the sophisticated presentation requirements of the mass media. Carolina Diosdado the head of Research, Information and Documentation, covering media contacts and presentation at TFD Cebu, felt that "local media [in Cebu] really helped [TFD] in trying to project [their] campaign [to release political detainees] to the general public". They had published many of TFD's press releases and publicised their activities. Her role has been to keep the media informed (Diosdado, C., 1993: O/I).

Jethro Dionisio commented that some other left groups like BAYAN have not changed with the times, and as a consequence are perceived as "boring":

BAYAN are still reporting their rallies as being really important news, for instance. That doesn't work any more. Those stories no longer get past the editors - they're not seen as interesting nowadays!

Dionisio, 1993: O/I.

TFD and other NGOs have, by contrast, recognised that they must accommodate the mass media's emphasis on "presentation" - or be ignored. They have recognised what the mainstream media's own strategies for creating "hard-hitting copy" or "exciting performances" are, and have adopted the tactic of their elite opponents: self-promotion. Consequently they have become more aggressive in their presentation, and are refusing to be sidelined. Maquiling Diosdado is the Education Officer for the Basic Christian Communities (BCC-CO) in the Visayas:

The prime preoccupation of the Philippine commercial media is - ratings! So when I was invited to an interview at Radyo Bombo [a Visayan radio station] I was afraid that what I might say might be distorted. What happened was, the issue was presented to a forum of speakers, and I was put at the back, away from the main microphones - marginalised, if you like. But I just spoke out nonetheless, so I had my say in spite of what you might call a built-in production bias against the equal airing of my views. Of course, not everybody could do that - it takes a forceful personality. But that's what you've got to learn if you want to be successful in media presentation: play the game according to their terms, but learn to take advantage of their desire for controversy, "liveliness", and so on.

They needed me as a "spokesperson" on behalf of the "pro-peace" groups [calling for "a just and lasting peace in the Philippines"]. I had to leave it up to the audience to make what they would of my views - but at least I got an opportunity to air them. I went into it with my eyes open - and a basic scepticism about the whole process. I had to take the initiative, and also be professional about getting to the microphone. So you have to maintain an "arms-length alliance" with the media if you want your organisation to get exposure.

Diosdado, M., 1993: O/I.

Paradoxically, the impecunious state of many local newspapers and radio stations can sometimes work to the advantage of non-elite sources seeking access to the local media. My informants in the mainstream provincial press confirmed that a well-written NGO press release which required little editing would often find its way into the inside pages of a local newspaper, because the "editorial staff" is frequently

a "one man [sic] band", only too happy to accept stories which require little additional attention. Local radio frequently reproduces its news bulletins *verbatim* from the local press; it may also take unedited NGO press releases. This is further evidence of the continuing primacy of print media as "the media of record". However, an important proviso is that the release is in the language of the station; as many stations broadcast their news on AM in the local language, NGOs must be prepared to provide dual versions in English (for FM) and the vernacular (Melliza, 1993: O/I). It indicates a commercial prioritisation of resources - ready-made news stories are acceptable to media outlets anxious to maximise profits for minimum outlay. Without a "public service" ethos, there are few pressures to provide higher standards in local news-gathering. This rather cavalier attitude to the checking of sources and the unedited airing of their agendas does *not*, of course, apply to the Manila dailies. In fact, the opposite is more the case - provincial stories are in unequal competition with metropolitan news, which usually takes precedence.

Set against the advantages of easier access to local media, however, are the far lower standards of provincial journalism. The provincial press is generally seen much more as an arena for elite contestations involving local patronage and clientelism. Newspapers are owned by rival elite fractions who play out their political rivalries on the pages of their papers, but with far less sophistication and guile than their Manila counterparts. This inevitably leads to the trivialisation and obfuscation of substantive issues in the provincial press: elite fractions fight for their interests in their respective papers by accusing rivals of "scandals" - the "unmasking of corruption" - and indulging in mutual public abuse. Local *caciques* and local military and police meanwhile constrain all but the most intrepid journalists with threats, favours and bribes.

How do these coercive constraints and skewed priorities affect the reporting of human rights abuses? The Aquino regime's "total war" policy in the late 80s and early 90s escalated the military's counterinsurgency tactics across the rural provinces, including the Western Visayas (Panay and Negros Occidental)⁹. The media - at both national and provincial level - finally began to re-engage with the issue of human rights violations by the military.

The journalists I interviewed had all filed reports describing military abuses against civilians, and they had all incurred the wrath of the AFP as a consequence - from threats of physical harassment to libel actions. Ed Cadagat of COBRA-ANS in Bacolod had received a miniature coffin through the post with his photo inside, and the message "May God Protect You!" in November 1990. Protests from international press freedom groups to President Aquino, which were published in the national newspapers, "somehow dissipated the threat. [...] I think there was probably an instruction from above. [Critical] reports like that, from countries sending aid, have an important impact" (Cadagat, 1993: O/I).

Jethro Dionisio was literally chased out of Mindanao by gun-toting vigilantes and the military, displeased at his articles about military violations. He has also received telephone death threats since then, for writing sympathetically about the trial of farmers arrested in Manila after anti-CARL protests (Dionisio, 1993: O/I). Alfred Dizon of NORDIS, Baguio, was threatened that he "would be next" on a military hit list, after exposing military killings in the Cordillera. He was "seriously scared", because at the time he was a long way from base,

[...] and the more remote you are, the more unprotected as a media practitioner you are. Here in Baguio City media people rally round, they release press reports in the national media, so the politicians and military know they have to be circumspect in their attacks on media personnel. But out there in the remote countryside you're on your own!

Dizon, 1993: O/I

Concerted action at national level is probably a journalist's best protection against intimidation. An arrest warrant was issued against Petro Melliza by a local mayor whose intimidations Melliza had reported. As a result of pressure which the case generated through PNF publicity in the national dailies, the warrant was eventually declared illegal and rescinded (Melliza, 1993: O/I).

Conversely official indifference to media reports from remote rural areas means that there are few outcomes whereby state agents are held to account; even meticulous investigations result in little or no action. Diosa Labiste filed stories in 1989 about the torture, rape and murder of two Samar women who were alleged NPA supporters. Labiste was alerted to the story by her contacts in TFD Visayas; she counterchecked it, as usual, "because NGOs can be biased in their own way. [...] They have their own agenda, of course" (Labiste, 1993: O/I). She corroborated the details by joining an investigatory governmental human rights commission, which exhumed the women's bodies in Samar and took statements from eye-witnesses. Samar is in the Eastern Visayas, and a full day's boat journey from Labiste's Panay base in the Western Visayas. She was able eventually to file the story through PNF, and it was published by the *Philippine Daily Inquirer*.

However the military simply issued a denial in the national newspapers and the case was quietly dropped. Labiste told me her "major frustration" in reporting human rights violations was that "you never know whether they'll land in the national press, and even if they do, you can be pretty sure there'll be no follow up" (Labiste, 1993: O/I). "When the law-makers are also the law-breakers" she says, quoting a popular Philippine epithet, "what chance have the tao [ordinary folk] of obtaining justice?" (*ibid.*). Likewise on environmental issues she has found general governmental inertia and venality:

I've been writing stories about the drought on Panay for four years now. It particularly affects mountain tribal farmers in the hinterlands. But few people in government, either locally or nationally, are interested in small-scale irrigation schemes. Only the large landowners can afford irrigation, usually by diverting common resources like rivers and streams. There's so

much corruption - or "anomalies", as they're called here - in the distribution of compensation and aid, but there's never any government investigation.

Labiste, 1993: O/I.

As several of my respondents pointed out, the media's job is to expose "anomalies", and perhaps suggest alternatives; it remains incumbent on the state, through its legislative and judicial arms, to act upon that information thereafter; the media has neither resources nor political will for such action. Ed Cadagat believes that the advocacy role of the media must be harnessed in conjunction with "other pressures":

For things to happen against local landowners [in Negros Occidental], you have to have organisation - for sit-ins and demonstrations at City Hall, for instance. The media can exert pressure for change, by reports which affect decision-making from above, but they can't act alone.

For example, I reported the case of a Negros landowner who, backed by armed goons, had grabbed land from formerly landless farmers. They'd been granted the land through one of Ramos's Certificates of Land Redistribution. PNF got my report published in the Inquirer, and it was drawn to Ramos's attention, so the Department of Agrarian Reform were forced to act. That's where the media can come in very useful. But the landless farmers were organised in the ARADO agrarian reform alliance, and that's why they got listened to.

The media can act together with other civil organisations, like cause-oriented groups, to create change in the thinking practices of people. This may eventually bring about change in our society. And that's what we need - especially here in Negros!

Cadagat, 1993: O/I.

At the same time Cadagat was under no illusions about the motives of newspaper proprietors for publishing his articles. The local liberal newspaper in Bacolod, *Today*, is published by a politically ambitious former executive officer of the reactionary National Federation of Sugar Planters. Cadagat noted that:

He is quite opportunistic about which side he supports [in a local political dispute], depending on which side he is getting his advertising revenue from. He'll hit a company that advertises with his newspaper rivals, or even change his line altogether for the promise of future advertising support. He has liberal pretensions, but underneath what matters to him is business!

Cadagat, 1993: O/I

Advertising, as the major source of income for virtually all the mass media in the Philippines, has a strong, reactive effect on the setting of media agendas. To what degree it inhibits the watchdog and conduit roles of the press, at both provincial and national levels, is examined in the following section.

10.9. The Economics of the "Alternative Voice"

Advertising revenues are not readily available to the alternative media, as Parenti pointed out (see Chapter Three, above). Because they are effectively excluded from this major source of mainstream media revenue, a number of attempts to produce "alternative" newspapers since EDSA have foundered. The momentum for radical change has also been lost, and with it the pre-EDSA "concerned" middle-class readership which supported struggling "alternatives" through subscription. For example, the post-EDSA Cebu alternative newspaper, *Newstime*, was forced to close when external funds dried; the "developmental" monthly in Baguio, the *Mountain Times*, in spite of a "volunteer" editor and columnists, has struggled to survive (Mongaya, 1993; Bugaling, 1993: O/Is).

Two "progressive left" mainstream journalists, Conrado de Quiros and Tony Nieva, who write columns for the *PDI* which are critical of social injustice and the *status quo*, both commented on the "dependency culture" of the current alternative media in the Philippines:

Agencies like PNF should be able to survive on their own: their product is good enough. Yet they're still largely dependent on overseas church funding. On the other hand IBON has done so much good work that a lot of organisations, including large ones, want to buy their output. It's strange that such operations still don't make money.

de Quiros, 1993: O/I.

Sophia Bodegon countered this criticism by pointing out the difficulties of "entering the marketplace" of mainstream media, such as the perennial lack of capital, and shoestring budgets for hardworked staff:

We don't have time for PR; we can't go to the National Press Club every night or hang around the Malacanang [Presidential palace] beat, cutting deals. Alternative newspapers never had the kind of money to pay the police the bribes you needed to cut in on the distribution rackets. There's always been a "liquidity problem" with alternative journalism.

Bodegon, 1993: O/I.

The case of the left-wing periodical *Midweek* illustrates a number of these problems.

10.10. Case Study: the Rise and Fall of Midweek

The weekly current affairs magazine *Midweek* was one of a handful of English-language current affairs weeklies appearing post-EDSA; it was probably the only one which took a consistently critical view of elite agendas. It encountered several key economic and political hurdles, ranging from circulation and distribution problems, through to financing, relations with advertisers, and management and editorial decision-making.

Midweek was set up just a few months before EDSA, in November 1985, by a small group who called themselves "Concerned Artists of the Philippines". They had demanded an end to media censorship at the time of Ninoy Aquino's assassination. Now they were intent on creating a "liberal-radical" weekly which could remain independent of big media investment. Their articles were to win national acclaim for journalistic quality. Yet their financial situation never really "took off". They could never afford to pay staff a competitive salary, so writers were poached onto the newly returned mainstream newspapers, avid for new talent after the dearth created during the Marcos period. Without financial liquidity, *Midweek* could not afford to break into the dealers' distribution "mafia", an all-important consideration for a periodical without lucrative advertising revenues. The editorial board had resolved they would not court multinational advertisers, who in any case had no interest in a left-wing, small circulation weekly (Lacaba, 1994: O/I).

Because they had no funds to pay marketing specialists, *Midweek* were unable to maximise even their intended audience of "middle-class, English-speaking intellectuals" (Malay, 1993: O/I). They began to plunge into a downward spiral of debts (incurred for running costs like newsprint, and the printing press they hired). This occasioned evermore irregular appearances on the newsstands; consequently their readership, however loyal at the outset, began to fall off rapidly. Finally Jose Lacaba, the editor, was himself lured, by the offer of a better salary, to go and help set up *Philippine Graphic* for a family of *parvenu* "ethnic Chinese" businessmen (see Chapter Seven). *Midweek* struggled on with falling circulation until after the presidential elections and then, in June 1992, collapsed.

In retrospect many of its articles still read as solid critical journalism, with serious analysis of current affairs. The debates over the US bases, debt rescheduling, and human rights were all covered in analytical depth. The magazine also published feature profiles of, or extended interviews with, the more liberal voices in Congress and on the left, including the CPP and NDF. These got little consistent airing elsewhere.

Was *Midweek's* collapse inevitable? Lack of financial stability and lack of serious marketing expertise - these had not been such salient concerns in the heady pre-EDSA days. Then, an audience starved of all critical news eagerly snatched at the offerings of the "mosquitos", however sporadic their appearance and uneven their production values. After EDSA, political activism was replaced by middle-class apathy, compounded by confusion on the political left. Readers, meanwhile, were now being offered a glut of uncensored, competing print journalism. They were in a position to demand "professionally-produced entertainment". Market values had triumphed over left-wing "amateurism".

10.11. Challenging the Hegemony: Strategies and Constraints

In the context of a Philippine mainstream press dominated by oligarchs and *parvenu* capital, the prospect for challenges to the dominant hegemony may at first sight appear bleak. Yet there are attempts by popular organisations to establish their own alternative information conduits and forums for debate. Because of the exponential growth of NGOs and people's organisations in the Philippines during the '80s, their personnel have been able to form networks with mainstream journalists which provide access, albeit severely restricted, to the Manila press. Conversely NGOs' own publications, with their limited circulation, distribution and language reach, can nevertheless sharpen popular debates about issues and social groupings which elites would prefer to remain politically marginalised. The strength of their initiatives has been shown through the introduction of issues like foreign debt onto the national agenda; and the insistent reporting, in the face of mainstream disinterest, of the rise in human rights violations under Aquino which eventually reached international attention.

The limitation of "micro" media initiatives is that many issues at the geographical "periphery" (in the provinces), perceived as affecting only the politically "marginalised", may have little impact on a "Manila-centric" middle and upper class media audience. It may be that the twin strategies of public mobilisation *and* media campaigns, taken in conjunction, are necessary to raise the public profile of issues, and to nudge public institutions out of their political inertia, venality and lack of accountability. However there remains the broader question of how to engage the attention and political commitment of an urban middle-class in national issues which they no longer identify with.

It may be asked whether in fact popular movements *need* middle-class support in the longer term; in the short term, however, it must be conceded that middle-class proponents of political change sometimes have better opportunities of making a political impact on elite and government agendas, which are far less accessible - at least directly - to marginalised groups and even popular organisations (Williams, 1983). NGOs and POs which are genuinely attempting to represent majoritarian interests are then faced with difficult political choices: whether to allow themselves to become effectively co-opted onto government agendas, however reformist in appearance, or to remain essentially chary of compromise with those they may legitimately regard as representatives of the elite, or forces supporting the dominant political hegemony.

Most NGO personnel and most jobbing journalists in the Philippines are themselves drawn from the relatively small and insecure middle classes. It is then perhaps hardly surprising that - once the political energies of EDSA's "people power" had been dissipated by the weak and ineffective liberalism of the Aquino regime - many from both groups should have opted to collaborate with the government. It was, after all, an administration that held out the (frequently elusive) promise of short-term middle-class gains

- in jobs, Western imports, and improved housing, for example - often achieved at the expense of the increasing immiseration of the majority. It has been left to a core of "advocacy" and investigative journalists in the newly-reconstituted "alternative" press and news agencies, and committed activists in the emerging "micro" presses, to insist that marginalised agendas gain access to the mainstream media. Where successful, this goal has been achieved partially through an ingenious variety of conduits and mobilisations which have exposed the exclusive, unaccountable nature of elite privilege and rule.

Endnotes to Chapter Ten

1. "Marginalised" groups include those who have little or no access to economic and political power on any regular or systematic basis. The term embraces those who have been dispossessed of rural and urban livelihoods without recourse to legal, social or economic justice - or even, in the Philippines, clientelistic patronage.
2. "In spite of P[esos]2,6 million paid out to contractors in advance, not a single tree has yet been planted in three months!" (PNF release, published in *PDI*, 10 February 1993. Original emphasis).
3. The College of Mass Communications, University of the Philippines (Diliman), the foremost institute of media, communications and broadcasting studies in the country.
4. Danilo Mariano, managing editor of *Diyaryo Filipino*, the Tagalog "stablemate" of the (former) *Daily Globe*. PNF also publishes weekly dispatches in Tagalog. Mariano was interviewed by Perez on 11 February 1990.
5. See, for example, Carino, J., de la Rosa, R., and Nettleton, G., "Environmental Conflict Between the Lumads [of Mount Apo] and the Philippine Government". Paper presented to the Second Conference on Philippine Studies, SOAS, London, 13-15 April 1994.
6. Francisco Lara and Horacio "Boy" Morales.
7. The Philippine equivalent of the CIA.
8. "Arado" = "plough" in Ilonggo, the language spoken in the Western Visayas.
9. The provinces of Aklan and Antique on Panay island, are, together with Negros Occidental, considered the heartlands of the reactionary sugar oligarchs; they suffered particularly from the military's counterinsurgency campaigns and intensive CAFGU operations. In Negros Occidental in 1993, for example, eight army battalions were active (Melliza, 1993; Cadagat, 1993: O/Is).

11. CHAPTER ELEVEN. THIRD WORLD MEDIA AND THE MARGINALISED VOICE

11.1. Introduction: Elite Power, the Media and Political Change

This study has raised questions about processes of "substantive democratisation" and the roles played by the media within those processes. It has explored the conditions under which certain media actors, as agents of specific political agendas and social classes, challenged an authoritarian regime and its successors during the period 1981 to 1993. The thesis has also attempted to explain why oppositional voices in the Philippine media adopted certain strategies at a particular historical moment, and what the political consequences of these developments have been. It has described and analysed some of the economic, political and social forces which have acted upon, and been themselves affected by, the media during the political struggles fought in the Philippines during this period; it has demonstrated, too, how the media have engaged with, and been changed by those struggles.

The study has challenged some of the broader assertions contained in those theories of the media which have attempted to "totalise" media structures as essentially manipulative and capable *only* of supporting a *status quo* favourable to ruling elite fractions. The "propaganda" model adumbrated by Herman and Chomsky, for example, can serve as a useful framework to explain why the mainstream media in a country like the Philippines *largely* serves the interests of the traditional oligarchy and those elite fractions who seek to usurp them (Herman, 1986; Herman and Chomsky, 1988). However, it cannot adequately account for the significant challenges which certain sections of the Philippine media mounted during the period after Martial Law which led to Marcos's downfall. Nor does it satisfactorily explain the media contestations which continue - albeit largely within the restricted ambit of micro and other alternative media - to represent more radical agendas.

Yet it can provide a suggestive conceptual basis for an exploration of what happened in the mainstream media *subsequent* to the overthrow of Marcos and the re-establishment of oligarch rule. It explains how intra-elite contestations in the Philippine mainstream media have served to articulate primarily elite class interests rather than to express the diversity of alternative voices of the politically marginalised in Philippine society. The evidence presented in this thesis suggests two major problematics: firstly, that of treating "the media" as an *homogeneous* institution; secondly, that of disregarding the *dynamics* of a highly *contested* site of cultural formation which is strongly shaped by external and internal economic, social and political forces and agencies.

The study has sought to explain apparent contradictions in the roles of the media - and especially of the press - over a period of considerable political change in the Philippines. It has attempted to do this by,

on the one hand, *differentiating* between individual media sectors, outlets, and even the roles of practitioners within media hierarchies - the individuated functions of journalists, editors, and proprietors, for example. On the other hand the study has made careful distinctions between the roles played by different media sectors - and, again, individual media outlets - during different political periods or indeed during specific, yet politically distinct, events.

The thesis claims that it is *not* adequate theoretically to assume that *all* media production promotes only dominant ideologies and the overall hegemony of capitalism. As Gramsci declared, the media provide one of the major sites for the contestation of the dominant hegemony (Gramsci, 1971; Boggs, 1984), and this study has offered a number of significant instances - from the "mosquito" presses of the liberalisation period, to current alternative news agencies and investigative centres - which have created political space to "voice out" alternative agendas. These have challenged and contradicted "mainstream" accounts to a critical and significant degree.

These contradictions have reflected the different political agendas and fractional interests both of different newspaper proprietors and of differing class interests. The Philippine elites have continued to perpetuate, by media persuasion and/or state military coercion, an oligarchic version of dependent "ersatz" capitalism, grafted onto an indigenous "semi-feudal" state. Popular mobilisations have challenged this project and have attempted to articulate a more democratic, counterhegemonic political programme through their own and other oppositional media.

The struggle at certain historic moments has been intense: the tensions between the crony and oppositional presses during the Marcos "liberalisation" period, in the reporting of human rights abuses and the challenges of the "Parliament of the Streets", have been a case in point. At times of crisis like these, when the contradictions within global capitalism and its local manifestations become increasingly explicit, oppositional voices can explore the political fissures which open up, to present alternative programmes and more democratic platforms. Yet, even *within* individual periodicals, the contradictions have also reflected the class tensions between, on the one hand, newspaper owners and financial supporters such as advertisers and other elite actors and, on the other hand, radicalised editors and jobbing journalists. Certain intellectuals within the middle class fractions of Philippine society, for example, gradually acquired a radical political consciousness. This developed "organically", in response to political initiatives such as media repression by the Marcos regime, during the successive periods of Martial Law, the post-1981 era of "liberalisation", and following the Aquino assassination in 1983 up to the culminating events of EDSA in 1986.

Some intellectuals and journalists continued thereafter to promote in the media a vision of a more democratic society which would be of benefit to a majority of Filipinos. They sought to *include* increasing sectors of the citizenry in political decision-making affecting their immediate concerns: the

sustainable production and equitable distribution of national wealth, and the alleviation of acute poverty. Other fractions of the middle classes were content to support the liberal programmes of "ersatz" democracy and economic liberalisation of the incoming Aquino regime. This "new" regime developed, contrary to electioneering promises, a formalist electoral democracy which excluded, *de facto*, those without access to economic wealth and political power, condemning the country at large to the political stagnation and economic short-termism of the elite oligarchs. Those middle class fractions who had in effect succumbed to the blandishments of a liberal bourgeoisie represented by Cory Aquino and her political allies were, however, content to incorporate those elements of radical programmes which would effectively "pacify" rhetorical demands for political change. These included, for example, minor constitutional amendments; but they did not address the major injustices and inadequacies of Philippine society.

In this context another contribution of this study has been to highlight the theoretical imperative to differentiate carefully among the roles of particular *fractions* of the middle classes, especially in a Third World country like the Philippines, in processes of democratic development. As the work of Barrington Moore (1966) and Rueschemeyer (1992) has indicated, short-term class alliances are strongly related to perceived long-term class interests. Thus two strongly contrasting interests *within* the generically-described "middle classes" may be distinguished. At one end of the middle class spectrum lies what might be characterised as the "managerial project" of technical, and ultimately elitist advancement; the fraction supporting this agenda will tend to gravitate towards alliances with the bourgeoisie.

At the other end of the middle class spectrum is the "advocacy project" of the "caring professions" and those intellectuals who choose to support them. The former group tend to ally themselves with their social "clients", members of the subordinate classes. The latter group, as Petras (1992) has pointed out, are stable neither politically nor over time: witness those intellectuals - in the academy, the media and elsewhere - who have supported radical agendas in more propitious times, but who have subsequently, according to Petras, "turned coat" and chosen to collaborate with liberal and even right-wing regimes and agendas, for self-aggrandisement, career advancement, or general social approval and kudos (Petras, 1992). Although Petras's examples are drawn largely from Latin America and the US a similar pattern is discernable in other cases, from Britain to the Philippines.

The danger of co-optation of popular radical ideas in order to depoliticise them is also something which Gramsci warned against (Gramsci, 1971; Boggs, 1984). Yet there has remained in the Philippines a stubborn resistance among subordinate classes to co-optation into the dominant hegemonic project of Philippine "ersatz capitalism" which in reality benefits so few of their number. Certain outlets of the radical left and micro media continue to articulate this resistance.

This study has traced how the Marcos government was delegitimised and overthrown, in part by

oppositional voices raised in the "alternative" presses. This finding endorses Herman and Chomsky's somewhat casual assertion that "the media are no monolith" (Herman and Chomsky, 1988), and that particular sectors within them are capable of mounting effective challenges to the *status quo*, *as and when these chime with the class interests of their personnel and public audiences*.

Radical voices were excluded both from the incoming Aquino regime and its "new" mainstream media, as the government reneged on earlier promises of radical reform. The weaknesses of a politically fractured state, unable to act decisively to control and reform unaccountable and corrupt political institutions thus became clear after EDSA. The media's "watchdog" role declined: although newspaper reports denounced the corruption of rival elite fractions, there was little effective political outcome in the form of substantive changes to the political system.

A pessimistic conclusion would therefore be that in a country where a reactionary and oligarchic elite - dominated by semi-feudal landlords, rentiers and *compradors* - maintains overall political hegemony, the mainstream media revert *in the main* to acting as a mouthpiece of that elite. This finding then bears out the overall claims of Herman and Chomsky's "propaganda" model of the media. However a detailed exploration of the "conduits" available in the Philippine media to the "alternative voices" of radicalised NGOs, people's organisations and other cause-oriented groups, reveals a more nuanced scenario. As a consequence of the lessons learnt in the pre-EDSA period about political mobilisation, there is now a recognition among such groups of the need to tackle the mainstream press and its agendas by exploring the cracks, fissures and political "interstices" among warring elites.

Furthermore these radicalised groups are also setting up their own media networks in the form of alternative news agencies, centres of investigative journalism, and informal contacts among sympathetic mainstream journalists. Thus in a Gramscian sense, the elite hegemony in the Philippines, though apparently secure at the national level, is strenuously contested at the local level. This continuing "war of position" has the potential to conscientise groups of Filipinos who are otherwise politically marginalised. The alternative media contribute thereby to their continued political mobilisation, without which the Philippine elites remain unsusceptible to any democratic participation, empowerment or change. Schudson (1991) has questioned whether Herman and Chomsky's particular "political economy" perspective of the mass media is capable of analysing the media's potential contribution to "democratic change":

If there is a serious ideological contestation in liberal democracies (as Herman and Chomsky would deny) how does it take place? What institutional mechanisms or cultural traditions or contradictions of power provide room for debate and revision? The political economy perspective typically does not say.

Schudson, 1991: 147.

It is questionable whether Herman and Chomsky "would deny [...] serious ideological contestation". It would be perhaps truer to say that their "propaganda model" of the media de-emphasises it. Schudson, by contrast, cites Hallin (1985) and Habermas (1979) in stressing that one of the reasons that the media "offer dissenting views and [...] publicize scandalous news arises [...] because they must attend to their own legitimation" (*ibid.*) as much as to that of capitalism as a whole. Only their own "integrity and [...] credibility with audiences" ensures their effectiveness as ideological institutions. However, this "pact" of credibility between mainstream media and their audiences may, under certain circumstances, break down. It did so in the case of the controlled presses of pre-1989 Eastern Europe, for example; and it did so again when the authoritarian strictures imposed on the Philippine crony press constrained it from reporting the Aquino assassination.

Under conditions of economic and/or political crisis, the "need to know" grows more acute among certain segments of the nation's press readership. Some or all of this hitherto compliant audience may then desert the mainstream, collaborationist press in favour of samizdat or alternative "mosquito" publications. Schudson insists that the "political economy perspective" does not address this contradiction adequately, and suggests "greater scholarly attention to the social organization of the news work and the actual practices of creating the news product" (*ibid.*). The present study maintains that both the "political economy" and the "social organisation" perspectives have both contributed valuable insights into the workings of the "liberal democratic media", including those in a Third World country like the Philippines. The "political economy" perspective may fail to account for the conditions under which counterhegemonic voices are best heard in the media. It does, however, explain why under liberal bourgeois democracy - and its Third World ersatz counterparts - social, political and institutional forces combine to oppose counterhegemonic struggles with elite strategies which favour political inertia.

This inertia can be overcome, my evidence suggests, only when other political forces combine to mobilise popular actors against the *status quo* - and then only temporarily. A "social organisation" perspective like Schudson's may explain how, as crises and anti-government challenges gather momentum, dissent *can* appear in the pages - and even some broadcasts - of the mainstream media. Yet Schudson's analysis begs the question of how the legitimating "credibility" he talks of is achieved: he "does not address" the problematic of *what* political and economic conjunctures motivate a populace into political mobilisations. Nor does he characterise the role which the media - mainstream, opposition *or* alternative - might play in such mobilisations. His "social organisation" perspective does not, in short, adequately consider those international and domestic actors, and the political and economic forces, all external or peripheral to the media, which legitimise or delegitimise a regime such as Marcos's.

As we have seen, it is these actors and forces which can play a major part in creating the broader political conditions under which media dissent is suppressed - as in 1972, when the declaration of Martial

Law was tacitly condoned by most major international actors. Conversely, dissent may be grudgingly tolerated by an authoritarian regime like Marcos's when, as after 1983, it is severely constrained by the international economic forces on which it has grown increasingly dependent for survival. It is only then that "dissenting views" dare to express themselves openly in the media, and are actively and publicly encouraged by an opposition movement.

This study has therefore sought to marry the two recognisably different levels of - complementary - analysis of the "political economy" and "social organisation" perspectives with that of a third: the causes and effects of interventions by international actors. This approach offers an analytical synthesis which may contribute a partial insight into how and why certain economic, political and cultural conditions have prevailed in one particular country at certain historical junctures. The study has also attempted to explain how certain changes in these conditions have produced quite specific - and even contradictory - political outcomes at different times. Thus a particular set of conjunctures from 1965 to 1972 led towards authoritarianism, whereas a superficially similar political and economic situation a decade later gave rise to moves away from authoritarianism. These after 1983 gathered into full-blown demands for "liberalisation" and a "return to democracy".

Yet the study has also raised a number of fundamental questions about the nature of "actually existing" democracy in the Philippines, and about how processes of democratisation have been thwarted by certain characteristics of the Philippine state and its elites. It is clear on the evidence presented here that characterisations of the Philippines as "democratic" must be qualified. Philippine politics continues to be dominated by "the tricks and deceit of [...] the neocolonial oligarchy" (Mulder, 1995: 8); therefore the "public world" in which formal electoral democracy operates remains "a sphere to defend oneself against, or to profit from", *not* to invest in politically for beneficial change for the majority (*ibid.*). In such a world the media are seen as one more weapon in the armoury of "tricks and deceit": a far cry from Habermas's "public sphere" of open debate and constructive discourse.

As Montes has pointed out, without *economic* democratisation the Philippine polity will continue to be racked by the "lopsidedness" of political patronage, economic waste and corruption, which benefit only the elite few:

When the distribution of economic assets is "feudal", both electoral and authoritarian structures can be more easily manipulated from the top so that the maintenance of control over the state has little to do with sound economic management.

Montes, 1989: 67.

I have described this politico-economic interrelationship as "ersatz democracy": a hollow shell of formal electoral democracy, dominated in reality by an elite which lacks the political will to develop equitable economic growth and politically accountable institutions. Equally, as Barrington Moore and

Rueschemeyer have both indicated, in such a fragmented, "semi-feudal" society popular forces often lack the political strength to combine effectively for constructive alternative political projects. Middle class sectors - particularly those with "managerial" agendas - meanwhile use political mobilisations in times of crisis merely to enhance their own narrow, short-term class interests. Their predominant demand is for a slightly larger share of the economic and political cake, rather than any longer-term radical alternatives which might benefit the majority within the country as a whole.

11.2. The Philippine Media's Role in Political Change

The Philippine media have, since their inception at the turn of the century, been an integral part of a "lopsided" economy and polity. They have been owned and controlled directly by the oligarchy, or by its allies, for most of their history. Marcos displaced the traditional owners with his own placemen - the notorious "cronies" - who operated as a new, but even more concentrated, oligarchy. Marcos also insisted that their new media outlets should hew far more closely than their "free" predecessors to his government's agendas. These, whilst employing the rhetoric of "developmental journalism", in fact heavily suppressed the media's "watchdog" role and thereby most of the potential public criticism of the Marcos government's venality, ineptitude and lack of accountability. The authoritarian state became the ultimate arbiter - often in the personalised shape of Marcos, his wife, or his military elites - of media content.

However, Marcos in the early 1980s increasingly lost the confidence of international capital through his gross economic mismanagement; and he lost the support of the US state department because of the burgeoning communist insurgency. The assassination in August 1983 of Ninoy Aquino crystallised the frustrations both of the radical and liberal left and of the hitherto apathetic middle classes within the country. Together they formed an increasingly effective and vocal opposition. The "liberal opening" which Marcos was compelled, reluctantly, to countenance thereafter also gave rise to a more active press, in parallel with other political mobilisations. The few critical voices which had been heard before the assassination grew rapidly in number in the lead-up to the "Snap Election" of February 1986. They found an increasing number of outlets in the opposition and "alternative" presses. These small presses articulated the resentment and disenchantment largely of the middle strata of Philippine society, including radicalised intellectuals, public service workers, and even middle management in private enterprise.

They grew bolder in expressing public dissatisfaction with the regime. More adventurous journalists reported, for example, the human rights abuses of the military. This was at once a way of arousing international indignation and support, and of indirectly criticising the regime. However it is questionable whether this "news from the opposition" played a proactive role in mobilising the general public - or was simply a reflection of the heightened political activity following the Aquino assassination and subsequent

economic crisis. Certainly, media practitioners working in the oppositional presses grew generally more defiant of Marcos's censorship legislation; but equally they had to remain circumspect about attacking the president and the military directly, in the face of serious harassment. It was arguably the organised political left, combined with the radicalised wing of the church, and finally a seriously disaffected faction of the military, which prepared the ground for the phenomenon of EDSA.

We have seen that immediately after the Aquino assassination a number of alternative titles such as *Mr. and Ms. Supplement* and *Malaya* caught the public mood by carrying an array of articles on "Aquino memorabilia", with that focus on personalities and events which has always been the stock-in-trade of conventional news reporting. These articles gave way by 1984 and 1985 to serious coverage of the deepening crisis, much of it centred on Marcos's weakening grip on the economy. Parallel with this coverage were articles on the growing social and political conflict within Philippine society. The reporting of human rights abuses by the military, for example, reflected only a part of what was by now a widespread disaffection, even revulsion, of increasing sectors of Philippine society - and the international community - towards Marcos's personal venality, and his regime's manifest failure to resolve the social tensions it had generated.

Such reports may, however, have diverted attention from the underlying long-term structural causes of the crisis, and the need to address them with radical programmes. The reports instead provided the "infotainment" elements of violence, conflict and fast-moving action habitually demanded of the news media in most "liberal democratic" countries. Many, however, remained short on contextualising analysis. Distanced from the daily concerns of the urban middle-class readership struggling to ride out increasing economic hardship, these reports of national crisis, social conflict and political abuses were able, temporarily, to unite both the left and the right - radicals, "trapos" and oligarchs alike - in a mood of "Marcos must go". They achieved this by a generalised opposition to the regime, without really challenging the dominant "pro-capitalist, anti-communist" hegemony at a national level, or proposing a viable alternative. Thus "opposition" periodicals from the liberal-centre like *Veritas* - backed by the church hierarchy, big business and the CIA - could find themes in common with the more radical "mosquitoes" like *Malaya*, without enquiring too deeply into their very real ideological differences.

This is not to deny the undoubted courage of individual journalists, editors and publishers of both "mosquito" and opposition periodicals who risked very real physical, sometimes mortal, danger in reporting the regime's abuses. It is rather to emphasise that after 1983, and certainly by 1985, both domestic and international opinion was already swinging against the regime; the oppositional press added one more, albeit powerful, voice - that of a largely urban, disaffected middle class - to those already being raised. They were not in the main, however, the voices of either the urban or rural poor - that majority who still remained largely ignored, except when their agendas coincided with those of the articulate middle classes. Their "people power" might be harnessed to oust Marcos, but after EDSA their

demands to address the endemic economic, social and political ills of Philippine society remained largely unattended. Perhaps the nearest that the pre-EDSA alternative "mosquito" presses came to a truly proactive role were as "conduits" for radical and reformist groupings, conveying news of mobilisations against the regime. They thus acted as informational and morale-boosting rallying points for activists - particularly those outside Manila, in what, it should always be remembered, is a far-flung archipelago with serious difficulties of communication.

It would probably be more accurate, nevertheless, to describe this role as interactive rather than proactive. Mass mobilisations of the lower classes often took place independently of the (largely English-language) media, organised by activists from labour, NGOs and POs, church and other social groups. By reporting these activities the media may have raised the levels of public "consciousness" on certain current issues, but the depredations of the Marcos regime were by 1985 so visible, and so universally recognised, that people were also able to draw on their personal experience and social networks to test the veracity of rumours, reports and wider analyses of the country's ills. The perception of the media, alternative or otherwise, as "heroes of EDSA" is likewise a distortion: "people power" and the potential fire-power of military revolt were the factors which actively ousted Marcos. *Radio Veritas* did, it is true, prove a useful weapon in the logistical deployment of the Manila crowds who rallied round the rebel troops; the Manila press was at this point, however, simply reporting retrospectively a "spontaneous" popular show of (largely urban middle-class) strength against a hated regime.

The political initiative had, by the time of EDSA, passed from the organised popular left to the middle class fractions and elite oppositionist "moderates" backing Cory Aquino. These had the financial backing of business, both domestic and foreign; the support of significant US political agencies; and the moral crusade of the church hierarchy. Acting together, this movement was able to sustain organisational impetus after the left, and its abortive boycott of the Snap Election, had run out of political energy (Constantino, 1987; Lane, 1990).

It may be that sections of the media can *help* to challenge a regime - if they are backed by politically vitalised fractions of the middle class which are prepared to voice their dissatisfactions publicly. This happened in the Philippines because Marcos had lost not only legitimacy, but also the support of powerful international actors like the US administration and foreign MNCs. Yet such challenges to the narrow political hegemony of a particular regime, arising through temporary class alliances between fractions of the middle and lower classes, together with oppositionists among the elites, do not, in the long term, seriously disturb the dominant hegemony of an autocratic or oligarchic state. This in the Philippine case combined elements of neo-colonial and even "semi-feudal" economic dependencies, political structures and cultural attitudes. Because of the collusion between domestic and international elites these structures and attitudes remained firmly in place after EDSA. "People power" amounted only to backing for a military revolt - not a "revolution" in political attitudes towards the way in which the

Philippine state and its institutions might evolve.

The pre-EDSA "opposition" and "mosquito" presses did tackle some of the issues most affecting the majority classes - poverty, land tenure and human rights, for example. These reports reflected their middle-class readership's shared concern to be rid of the perceived cause of these societal ills and their own immiseration - the regime of Ferdinand Marcos. Once this goal had been achieved, however, their interest in these agendas faded. At EDSA the middle classes rallied, not to the radical left's boycott, but to Cory Aquino's return to the *status quo ante* and the agendas of trapos and oligarchs.

11.3. Post-EDSA Mainstream Press: Constraints and Limitations

After EDSA the newly reconstituted liberal mainstream media did not really attempt to step outside their ascribed role of "info-tainers" - the providers, amongst other items, of news and "information", which must remain, above all, entertaining. The economic tyranny of the "market" had replaced the political censorship of a dictatorial regime. The market operates "tyrannically" amongst media enterprises due to several factors. The most important of these include the constant pressure from advertisers and other commercial and business interests towards high-volume sales of populist material; the attenuation of independent voices in the face of the concentration of media ownership and control; and the high technical costs of entry into the industry.

The evidence of my case studies of the *Philippine Daily Inquirer (PDI)*, *Malaya*, the *Manila Bulletin*, *Veritas* and *Radio Veritas*, *Midweek*, and the *Philippine Graphic* also demonstrates that other extraneous factors affect economic "take-off" and subsequent viability of a particular title. On the one hand the timing of entry into the market can make a significant difference to whether a periodical will grow in public esteem or remain marginal to "public concerns" - the agendas set, or at least manipulated, by elite power brokers. Thus *Malaya*, *Mr. and Ms.* and *Veritas*, for example, benefitted from the huge public interest in "credible" news following the assassination of Ninoy Aquino. The first two, with their publishing machinery already in place, were in a position to report developments which the crony press were constrained from publishing. The last was buttressed by financial support from church and Makati business interests, which gave it the ability to establish itself immediately in the wake of public indignation at the assassination.

Likewise, the *Inquirer* rode in on the public interest surrounding the announcement of the "Snap Election". As an "independent" voice it gained, and maintained, "credibility" through a liberal-left critique, first of Marcos's regime, then of Aquino's. Its owners had the experience of the successful *Mr. and Ms.* to build on; it could also attract, and financially afford, a panoply of committed, "quality" columnists and editors. The newspaper has consequently been able to offer a range of voices which,

clearly, the middle-class reading public has liked. Conversely its chief conservative rival, the *Manila Bulletin*, has been able to weather the vicissitudes of regime changes by representing the voice of the elite-fraction-in-power at any given moment. It supported Marcos when he appeared unassailable in the early eighties; after the assassination of Nino Aquino it became more circumspect. When Cory Aquino came to power the newspaper was tactfully muted in its direct criticisms of government, whilst jealously supporting the interests of its new owner, one of the "new" post-Marcos ethnic Chinese entrepreneurs, Emilio Yap.

Another significant factor in the survival of smaller mainstream titles has been the sustained support of vested, and rent-seeking, business interests - often in the face of the patent lack of commercial viability of the titles themselves. They illustrate the difficulties of trying to maintain editorial independence, let alone a critical voice, in a period of political retrenchment. In this respect, Herman and Chomsky's "propaganda" model of the media - as "megaphone" for elite interests and their agendas - appears very plausible.

The post-EDSA mainstream media, then, were recaptured by oligarchs, other "returned" members of the pre-Marcos elite, and the "new" bourgeoisie. Taken together, these groups included the elite fractions whose capital had "fortunately" remained intact; or had been "acquired" during the Marcos years; or was subsequently "restored" by the Aquino government. Once established or re-established, media titles were used by their owners mainly to fight intra-elite economic and political skirmishes, beneath a veneer of "liberal pluralism". The voices heard from these sources may have been critical of each other's and the government's projects; but they showed waning interest in the popular agendas which had temporarily been heard among the "mosquito" presses before EDSA, including the professed concern over human rights abuses. As the Philippine middle classes generally reverted to tacit collusion with the post-EDSA elites, those claiming to represent the marginalised of Philippine society - still the majority of the populace - had to turn to other channels of communication for the articulation of any real programmes of reform and renewal.

The "mosquito" presses had been absorbed into the mainstream, or had atrophied through the steep decline of their readers - whose preoccupations had returned to more narrow, urban middle class concerns. However one media legacy of the pre-EDSA protest movements and their alternative newsheets remained: the "micro", "group" or "small" presses. These were generally run by NGO, PO, labour, church and social groups, primarily to inform their members and publicise and lobby for their causes, both internationally and at home. These presses were still prepared to address, besides immediate cause-oriented concerns, those wider structural deficits in Philippine society which needed steady attention and analysis to render them comprehensible and immediate to a more popular audience. Besides the technical feat of publication-on-a-shoestring, these NGO "publicity agents" - often no more than a single dedicated activist, working from a provincial office and doubling as events coordinator, news stringer and publicist

- were able to create networks with sympathetic journalists in the mainstream media who would be prepared to "smuggle" their material into the mainstream as "news" items, investigative reports, or even "opinion columns".

11.4. Conclusions: the Media in an "Ersatz" Democracy

It is clear from the foregoing that the extent of genuine democratisation cannot simply be assessed from constitutional provisions such as "freedom of speech, assembly and organisation". Economic and political pressures and other factors will affect the development of a genuine political will to implement such provisions. Be they ever so "liberal" in theory, Philippine newspaper owners cannot, in the long term, allow attitudes struck in public, to gain short-term support for popular agendas, to interfere with economic survival. The linkages and networks between popular groupings are more than matched, in the media as elsewhere, by those of the Philippine elites. It is, moreover, often the conflicts and tensions *within* the bourgeois fractions which their respective media outlets are designed to articulate, suppress or protect against. Conflicts arise particularly over *comprador*, rent-seeking, and tertiary sector activities with short-term profitability or potential economic advantage.

Because of the often undisclosed stakes of Philippine business elites in media holdings, the ability of the press to make genuinely independent reports on corruption and law-breaking, or even simple disclosures of interest is severely constrained. This in turn reduces its capacity for investigative and "watchdog" roles. Whilst the trivialised surface of corruption and crime is reported in the Philippine media, the underlying maldistribution and abuse of economic and political power remains clandestine and usually unpublicised. Much elite economic and political activity is not accountable simply because the media are often gagged by their elite ownership affiliations. "Whistle-blowing" is invoked primarily to damage rivals, not necessarily to root out corruption *per se*. This potential to muffle the Philippine press, or to use it as a business weapon, cannot give rise to pluralism in the democratic sense of a presentation, debate and informed assessment of opposing and diverse views. It leads merely to a confusion of conflicting elite voices attacking each other. Without any background contextualisation the average lay reader cannot hope to understand the deeper economic and political implications of such attacks.

Herein lie the real tensions within the Philippine media: between the classic conflicting class interests not only of owners and producers, but also of middle class "brokers" like editors and columnists. The latter groups may be ambivalent towards the class projects of those both above and below them; they choose to support now one and now the other to promote their own agendas. These in turn are not homogeneous, any more than there is homogeneity between the fractions of the upper middle and lower middle classes.

Here, surely, lies a partial explanation for those internal contradictions within media organs, particularly newspaper titles, which can physically accommodate an apparently liberal band of opinion at little extra economic or political cost in the short term. Media owners can back several political and economic horses simultaneously - the interests of oligarch owners AND liberal middle class readers AND (corruption-tainted) politicians with the "right" connections. In the short-term a broader appeal should sell more papers; in the longer term political debts can be called in and banked to economic advantage. "Credibility", in Schudson's terms, is also conveniently maintained.

Media proprietors and publishers can thus spread the risks of operating in a rent-seeking environment. The operative factors are the short-termism of such a political enterprise, and the ultimately restricted nature of the apparently "liberal" band of opinion. Its purpose is instrumental to private rent- and profit-taking. It does not, in the Philippines, advance the genuinely pluralistic media project of open and democratic public debate and diversity. This finding is in general accord with Herman and Chomsky's "propaganda" model for the mainstream media elsewhere.

The Philippine mainstream media's sporadic attempts to perform their role of watchdog, and to provide the forum wherein public accountability may be pursued, continue in the main to succumb to the political inertia pervasive in the Philippines. Administrators pay lip-service to correcting the perceived "faults" of government and public services unearthed by the media; yet sustained and sustainable reform - of the military, the police, the judiciary, or of land tenure, economic priorities and human rights violations - has remained elusive. Public interest in the "injustices", corruption and sheer political incompetence revealed by the media generally dissipates, along with the fading political will of those in office - and "business-as-usual" returns. Only when media campaigns work in parallel with political mobilisations, organised to harness genuine popular demands or discontents, have issues been addressed, often reluctantly, by Congress or the government (see, for example, Cadagat, 1993: O/I, Chapter Ten).

However, as the detail in this study amply demonstrates, this seldom translates into political action for change. Human rights abuses, for example, in the shape of political detentions and military and police coercion - "disappearances", "salvagings", the indiscriminate hamletting and killing of the civilian population - escalated with the military prosecution of "total war" after 1988. Particularly in poor rural areas such as the Visayas, Central and Northern Luzon, Mindanao and, since 1993, Sulu in the far southwestern periphery of the archipelago, violations have continued unabated under both the Aquino and Ramos regimes. In general, however, these abuses have received noticeably less attention in the mainstream media since 1988 than during the latter years of the Marcos regime. In a generally fearful political climate - such as that prevailing in many provinces during the rise of the vigilante movements around 1986-87 - the mainstream media became relatively quiescent as "watchdogs". It has often been left to NGO "micro" presses and the "alternative" news agencies like PNF and PCIJ to "blow the whistle" - but who hears them, with their small circulations and relatively tenuous links to the

metropolis? Do their middle-class readerships really care any more, when the issues do not appear to affect them directly?

The role of the middle classes, and that small segment of media practitioners in their midst, is equivocal: they are only prepared to fight or resist when their class interests, economically or politically, are severely threatened. They are basically more comfortable than the classes beneath them, but are also heavily dependent for livelihood and economic well-being on their elite masters, whether in private or state capitalist enterprises. Among such enterprises, of course, the media themselves number.

In the Philippines, the conditions under which the middle classes were finally moved to fight and resist were created gradually from the late 1970s by the Marcos "kleptocracy", in which a steady economic attenuation resulted in ever more painful economic hardship, first for the politically excluded lower classes, then the middle classes, and finally for substantial sectors of the privileged elites themselves. Likewise, opposition and resistance to Marcos's policies and their economic outcomes built up gradually. As the prospects for "reforming" the Marcos regime receded in the mid 1980s, the recognition - facilitated by increasingly vocal "alternative" and opposition presses - that drastic change would have to be fought for and organised, did help to create the groundswell for political mobilisation.

"Ersatz" democracy guarantees nothing; there are certainly no direct links with economic or political development, as has been inferred in the drive of Western financial institutions like the IMF to tie economic aid to the twin "conditionalities" of "free market economic liberalisation" and "democratisation". What links there are remain indirect, with time lags between economic and political changes. As this study has stressed, causalities are complex: they certainly do not respond directly to the kind of top-down "democratisation" exercises currently in vogue in the former "Second" and "Third" worlds.

A major role of the media in any substantive democracy must be to try and *render intelligible* as much of the world as possible: by contextualising, explaining and offering alternative opinions. There then arise the liberal media practitioners' twin preoccupations with "credibility" and "balance". Yet "balance" should represent a true diversity of voices, necessarily tentative and provisional, but with agendas of genuine reform based on historically-grounded, critical analysis - not the old authoritarian "certainties" of the dominant hegemony with its "official", elite-sponsored pronouncements. It is therefore incumbent on the media, in the Philippines as elsewhere, to include voices which are otherwise excluded from political decision-making. Marginalised Filipinos from the non-metropolitan "periphery" - which accounts for almost three-quarters of the citizenry - should gain greater access to both political and media institutions, in order that they may participate more effectively in their collective economic and political destinies.

Besides government propagandists, and defenders of that top-down development which benefits primarily those in economic and political control, the media should also allow a country's citizens to hear from those whose livelihoods these governmental decisions most affect. In a "substantive" democracy the media should *enable* the holders of alternative and marginalised viewpoints to "voice out" their agendas - and be heard and listened to. This study has shown that the media cannot perform these roles adequately when they are constrained, gagged or suppressed by the coercion of the authoritarian state, or the more elusive censorship of "market forces".

APPENDIX: Original Interviews (O/Is)

All interviews with Desmond Smith, unless otherwise indicated.

All interviews conducted in Manila, at place of work, unless otherwise indicated.

"UP" indicates College of Mass Communications, Diliman Campus, University of the Philippines - see also Chapter One: Methodology.

Carlos Allones, former information officer; chairperson, KMU Visayas, Cebu City: 16 April 1993.

Manuel Almario, columnist, *Philippine Graphic*: 24 February 1993.

Eugenia Apostol, publisher, *Philippine Daily Inquirer*: 1-2 March 1993.

Sophia Bodegon, editor-in-chief, Philippine News and Features (PNF); executive director, Crossroads Publishing Inc. (CPI):

- with Elizabeth Perez, UP student: 24 January 1990;

- with Desmond Smith: 17 February 1993.

Professor Leonor Briones, president, Freedom from Debt Coalition: 19 March 1993.

John Bugaling, editor, *Mountain Times*, Baguio City: 22 April 1993.

Jose "Jo" Burgos, publisher, *We Forum* and *Malaya*: 19 February 1993.

Ninez Cacho-Olivares, columnist, *Philippine Daily Inquirer*: 10 February 1993.

Edgar Cadagat, chief correspondent, COBRA-ANS, Bacolod City, Negros Occidental: 2 April 1993.

Pedro Chanco, vice president, News and Public Affairs, ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corporation: 3 May 1993.

Joy Chavez, editor-in-chief, IBON Databank: 2 March 1993.

Serge Cherniguin, vice president, National Federation of Sugar Workers - Food and General Trade (NFSW-FGT), Bacolod City, Negros Occidental: 2 April 1993.

Sheila Coronel, director, Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism: 17 February 1993.

Professor Renato Constantino Sr., historian: 10 May 1993.

Melinda de Jesus, executive editor, *Philippine Journalism Review*: 26 February 1993.

Conrado de Quiros, columnist, *Philippine Daily Inquirer*: 8 March 1993.

Jethro Dionisio, reporter/ deskman, *Sun Star Daily*, Cebu City: 14 April 1993.

Carolina Diosdado, regional organiser, Task Force Detainees Visayas, Cebu City: 17 April 1993.

Maquiling Diosdado, education officer, Basic Christian Communities (BCC-CO) Visayas, Cebu City: 17 April 1993.

Alfred Dizon, staff reporter, Northern Dispatch (NORDIS), Baguio City: 23 April 1993.

Elizabeth Enriquez, former television newscaster, Channel Four; lecturer in broadcasting. UP: 12 March 1993.

Lemuel Fernandez, associate editor, *Panay News*, Iloilo City, Panay: 28 March 1993.

Diosa Labiste, staff reporter, Philippine News and Features (PNF), Iloilo City, Panay: 26 March 1993.

Jose "Pete" Lacaba, editor, *Philippine Graphic*; former editor, *Midweek*: 22 February 1993.

Cheche Lazaro, executive producer, Probe Productions Inc.: 4 May 1993.

Leticia "Letty" Magsanoc, editor-in-chief, *Philippine Daily Inquirer*: 1-2 March 1993.

Carolina "Bobby" Malay, former NPA cadre, lecturer in journalism, UP: 10 March 1993.

Petro Melliza, freelance journalist, *Visayan Tribune* and Philippine News and Features (PNF), Iloilo City, Panay: 25 March 1993.

Anol Mongaya, former news editor, *Newstime*, Cebu City: 15 April 1993.

Tina Monzon-Palma, vice president, News and Public Affairs, Channel Five: 4 May 1993.

Tony Nieva, columnist, *Philippine Daily Inquirer*; chair, National Union of Journalists of the Philippines: 24 February 1993.

Sister Mary Radcliffe, Task Force Detainees: 20 March 1993.

Ed Reyes, executive vice president, Philippine Movement for Press Freedom; editor *Press Freedom Advocate*: 16 February 1993.

Rosalinda Reyes, information officer, Task Force Detainees: 17 March 1993.

Florangel Rosario-Braid, president, Asian Institute of Journalism: 12 March 1993.

Professor Luis Teodoro, dean of faculty, College of Mass Communications, Diliman, UP; former editor, *Midweek*: 4 March 1993.

Bobby Tuazon, PNF Managing Editor:

- with *Elizabeth Perez*, UP student: 15 November 1989.

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