

The Logical Conclusion:
Hamelink's Cultural Autonomy Theory of Communication
And Its Implementation In Marcos-Era Philippines

Cees Hamelink has seen the future and he isn't laughing. The media theorist envisions a world dominated by multinational corporations, particularly in the developing countries, where "cultural synchronization" threatens, as never before, delicate balance of adaptive cultural relations by many parts of the world.¹

Cultural synchronization implies that the decisions regarding the cultural development in a given country are made in accordance with the interest and needs of a powerful central nation and imposed with subtle but devastating effectiveness without regard for the adaptive necessities of the dependent nation. The principal agents of cultural synchronization today are the transnationals, particularly international communications firms, largely based in the United States, which are developing a global investment and marketing strategy. Transnational advertising, however, and the current strategies of technology transfer constitute the greatest threat to cultural autonomy and the two axes around which much of the global expansion of transnationals is centered.²

By Hamelink's reckoning, the laborious and delicate process of development can afford only a minimum of internal contradictions to retain some potential for warding off the external pressures. Therefore, to alleviate this cultural synchronization, Hamelink proposes a new international order, so that not only will fundamental economic changes have to support changes in the information order, but changes in the informational structures will also support basic economic transformation. To this end, in the name of social stability, he advocates national control over a country's information system is an absolute prerequisite for national sovereignty.³

All very interesting – at least to ivory tower habitués. In the real world, however, his proposals have several problems. To begin with, they're not terribly new. For starters, his proposals already have been articulated and implemented in much of the world, and

¹ Hamelink, Cees J. Cultural Autonomy in Global Communications. New York City: Longman, 1983: 22-23.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., 89, 105, 110

realized their high actualization in Nazi Germany – yes, Hamelink advocates nothing less than a fascist system of media control.

However, Germany in the 1930s and 1940s hasn't been the only country to develop its communications according to fascist theory. The United States, beginning with the political dominance of the self-styled progressives in the 1890s, and continuing with that legacy today, operates according to fascist principles of economics and of media control. This same philosophy – that of the Roosevelts, Woodrow Wilson, and Herbert Hoover – was part of the American legacy to the Philippines. Accordingly, the economic transformation and media control Hamelink proposes – the fascist principles espoused by the U.S. political leadership – took root in Philippines political culture, but didn't really come to fruition until Ferdinand Marcos became president, and subsequently declared martial law in 1972. The media became a prime casualty of this period.

This philosophy replaced relatively laissez-faire approach to economics and politics predominant throughout the 19th century; by the late 1890s, a significant number of intellectuals and politicians were attracted by the good a stronger government could achieve--if only government power were in the "right" hands. The "right" hands belonged to members of American industry, along with the nation's intellectuals and labor leaders, who began to clamor for a totally planned new order marked by strong government, and extensive and pervasive government intervention and planning, for the purpose of providing a network of subsidies and monopolistic privileges to big-business interests. In particular, the economy could be cartelized under the aegis of government, with prices raised and production fixed and restricted, in the classic pattern of monopoly; and military and other government contracts could be channeled into the hands of favored corporate producers. Labor, which had been becoming increasingly rambunctious, could be tamed and bridled into the service of this new, state monopoly-capitalist order, through the device of promoting a suitably cooperative trade unionism, and by bringing the willing union leaders into the planning system as junior partners. In short, a general clamor arose for an economy of fascism.⁴

In many ways, the new order was a striking reversion to old-fashioned mercantilism, with its aggressive imperialism and nationalism, its pervasive militarism,

⁴ Friedman, Milton, and Rose Friedman. Free to Choose: A Personal Statement. New York City: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980: 5; A New History of Leviathan. Ed. Radosh, Ronald, and Murray N. Rothbard. New York City: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1972: 66-67, 142.

and its giant network of subsidies and monopolistic privileges to large business interests. The original mercantilism had been brutally frank in its class rule, and in its scorn for the average worker and consumer. Instead, the new dispensation cloaked the new form of rule in the guise of promotion of the overall national interest, of the welfare of the workers through the new representation for labor, and of the common good of all citizens. Hence the importance, for providing a much-needed popular legitimacy and support, of the new ideology of progressivism, which sanctioned and glorified the new order. In contrast to the older laissez-faire liberalism of the previous century, progressivism gained popular sanction for the new system by proclaiming that it differed radically from the old, exploitative mercantilism in its advancement of the welfare of the whole society. And in return for this ideological buttressing by the progressives, the new system furnished them the prestige, the income, and the power that came with posts for the concrete, detailed planning of the system as well as for the ideological propaganda on its behalf.⁵

For their part, the progressive intellectuals acquired not only prestige and a modicum of power in the new order, they also achieved the satisfaction of believing that this new system of government intervention was able to transcend the weaknesses and the social conflicts that they saw in the two major alternatives. Here was seemingly a system that replaced laissez-faire capitalism not by the rigors and class hatreds of proletarian Marxism, but by a new strong State, planning and organizing the economy to bring harmony and cooperation to all classes on behalf of the general welfare. In the progressive view, the new order provided a middle way, a "vital center" for the nation, as contrasted to the divisive "extremes." It was, not coincidentally, to be a neomercantilism, a "mixed economy," heavily staffed by these selfsame intellectuals.⁶

With regard to the media, the newly empowered State – again with the intellectuals' assistance – clamped down on those critical of its aims and actions. For example, Herbert Croly, progressive editor of *The New Republic*, during World War I eagerly worked in the U.S. government's censorship activities, which virulently sought to quash any dissent toward that government's policy. Another example, and one of the clearest indications of how far removed Hoover was from laissez-faire, was the nationalization of the radio industry. Hoover pushed through the Radio Act in 1927 as a substitute for the courts' increasing application of the common law, granting private

⁵ New History of Leviathan, op. cit., 66-67.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 67-68, 93.

ownership of the airwaves to the first radio stations that put them into use. All his life Hoover had been a dedicated corporatist; but all his life he'd also liked to cloak his corporate-state coercion in cloudy voluntarist generalities. All his life he had sought and employed the mailed fist of coercion inside the velvet glove of traditional voluntarist rhetoric, even while he set out deliberately to "reconstruct America."⁷

The origin of this philosophy is basic. It follows that the small groups in a society will usually have more lobbying and cartelistic power per capita than the large groups in societies that have been stable for a long time. The same stability has also made it easier for the firms and families that advanced to organize or collude to protect their interests against still newer entrants.

Organizations of substantial firms, which were often manufacturing firms, would frequently have an incentive to seek protection through tariffs, quotas, or other controls for their industry, and in at least some of these countries they were very likely to get it. Once imports could be excluded, the home market could also be profitably cartelized. If foreign firms should seek to enter the country to compete with the domestic firms, the latter could play upon nationalistic sentiments to obtain exclusionary or discriminatory legislation against the multinationals. Conflicting groups (propertied or propertyless alike), given access to political restructuring of property rights, would use this avenue to redistribute wealth and income at the expense of others and at the expense of the viability of the system. The rulers of the State may become far more insecure, however, since such action invites potential competitors into the field to capture the allegiance and support of the disaffected groups. Various compromises, such as "bread and circuses," or partial land distribution schemes, may delay a denouement. Furthermore, non-voluntary forms of organization will exist if profitable to the State (non-voluntary slavery, for example); relatively inefficient forms of organization will survive if more efficient forms threaten the survival of the State from within or without; and forms of organization that have low measurement costs to the rulers for tax collecting will persist even though they are relatively inefficient.⁸

⁷ Ibid., 112, 124, 143-144.

⁸ North, Douglass C. Structure and Change in Economic History. New York City: W.W. Norton & Co., 1981: 43, 116, 188; Olson, Mancur. The Rise and Decline of Nations: Economic Growth, Stagflation and Social Rigidities. New Haven, Conn.: Yale UP, 1982: 41, 84, 130.

This period coincided with the acquisition of the Philippines by the United States, and from 1898 until independence in 1946, the United State imbued the Philippines with progressive notions. In particular, the educated Philippine *ilustrado* elite acquired the values of the American progressives of the Roosevelts, William Howard Taft, Wilson, Hoover, and others. Of special importance in both countries is the transmission of progressive ideology, not through naked coercion, but by the legitimate efforts of law and democratic elections. The Philippines has a long tradition of Roman and canonical law, with a substantial overlay of U.S. constitutional and case law jurisprudence, on a common law base. The original American intention to decentralize government had, of course, early been abandoned in the interest both of control and economy.⁹

The Filipino elite under provisional Manuel Quezon generally consisted of wealthy landowners cultivating rice and sugar, along with a very few entrepreneurs and a handful of professional men. During the struggle for Philippine national independence, individual rights were seldom the object of solicitude on the part of Philippine governmental representatives. The great bulk of the electorate blindly followed the nationalist leadership, and the relatively small, politically literate section of Philippine society as a rule suppressed any dissatisfaction with Quezon's authoritarian leadership for fear of weakening the national campaign for independence. In the economic field, Quezon aspired to see a more equitable division of the fruits of Philippine society. His emphasis on social justice witnessed to his support, in the abstract, for such a redistribution. Whether addressing disgruntled tenants in Pampanga or commenting on the protests of businessmen at the prospects of an increased tax burden, Quezon spoke with great vehemence of his determination to force those of wealth to share more widely. He was clearly successful in influencing urban employers to raise worker's wages and took steps to intervene in disputes in favor of the workers, threatening to take over recalcitrant businesses. Echoing Mussolini, Quezon declared, "The good of the state, not the good of the individual, must prevail."¹⁰

Even before World War II, Jose Laurel (father of Aquino's vice president) had defended the emergency powers of President Quezon, saying that "constitutional dictatorship" was in keeping with a world-wide trend in which "totalitarianism is

⁹ American Constitutionalism Abroad: Selected Essays in Comparative Constitutional History, passim. Ed. George Athan Billias. New York City: Greenwood Press, 1990; Gleeck, Lewis E. Jr. President Marcos and the Philippine Political Culture. Manila: Loyal Printing, Inc., 1987: 3; Steinberg, David Joel. The Philippines: A Singular and a Plural Place, 2nd ed. Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1990: 66.

¹⁰ Gleeck, op. cit., 6-8; Seagrave, Sterling. The Marcos Dynasty. New York City: Harper & Row, 1988: 37.

gradually supplanting democracy." He espoused the belief that Japan's "phenomenal rise has been due, in the main, to its system of government which is characterized by massive powers, rigidly centralized, but exercised with wise benevolence." Laurel's espousal of "constitutional dictatorship" may have planted the seeds for Marcos's "constitutional authoritarianism" 30 years before martial law was declared. Laurel himself had the opportunity to put his views into practice as the puppet president during Japan's occupation in World War II.¹¹

The first independent Philippine president, Manuel Roxas, established the Reconstruction Finance Corp., which played a key role in providing the essential financing for reconstruction and the restoration of various government corporations. (Hoover had established the eponymous American predecessor in the Great Depression to give government subsidies to large corporations.) Of major importance was the assistance he rendered in founding the government's Central Bank in 1949. In the 1950s, the country's sugar interests successfully advocated inflation to increase their earnings, government subsidies for fertilizers (allegedly for the poor farmers, but actually for themselves), and huge bond issues for government development projects. President Ramon Magsaysay pushed a an Anti-Subversion Act through the legislature, under which many Filipinos were stripped of jobs and reputations, or sentenced to prison, for subversion, which became whatever the executive office wanted it to be. Diosdoro Macapagal, Marcos' predecessor as president, backed a Five-Year Integrated Socio-Economic program, with a plank of reducing the growing influence of the rich, particularly the Lopez sugar/finance/media combine.¹²

The young Marcos also learned that the Philippine culture tolerated the distortion of political institutions, including the judicial system, to favor the chief executive, that both the executive agencies and the congress were subject to the president's will, and that considerations of national prestige as determined by the president overrode the paper guarantees of the constitution. Despite these realities, however, he noted that the public cherished an abiding respect for legal forms, and that the power of an aroused press was formidable. These were lessons that he never forgot. Marcos at the time also began collaborating with Ryoichi Sasakawa, a reputed leader of the Japanese underworld and an

¹¹ McDougald, Charles C. The Marcos File: Was he a Philippine Hero or a Corrupt Tyrant? San Francisco: San Francisco Publishers, 1987: 123-125.

¹² Gleeck, op. cit., 15, 33, 52; Seagrave, op. cit., 151.

avowed fascist imprisoned by U.S. for three years after World War II as a Class A war criminal.¹³

Not an advocate of class warfare like his predecessor Diosdoro Macapagal, Marcos nonetheless relied heavily on a corps of technocrats and criticized the rich. "Ours tends to be an oligarchic society," he said in a 1971 speech. "This simply means that the economic gap between rich and poor provides the wealthy few the opportunity of exercising undue influence on the political authority." And he recommended, "The fundamental task of drastic political reform is to democratize the entire political system."¹⁴

Marcos later elaborated on this concept, using both Hamelink's criticisms and the progressives' rhetoric in an advocacy of fascism:

Corruption at the top is matched by social corruption below. The oligarchic elite manipulate the political authority and intimidate political leaders; the masses, in turn, perpetuate a populist, personalist and individualist kind of politics.

And yet the issue is inescapable. As I have said earlier, there are two alternatives: socialization and democratization [emphasis added].

For it is only after the big landed estates have been broken up, after the land has been redistributed more equitably, that economic power and therefore political power will be more equitably distributed in the Philippines. This will mark the phasing out of the feudalistic stage in our economic development and the advent of a more democratic society, rooted in a just and responsive land system. And so on from the land to the factory: there will follow a more equitable distribution of opportunities--of freedom and welfare.

The permeation of oligarchic "values" is also managed through the control of the means of mass communication. It is no longer a secret that the displeasure of the oligarches is communicated through radio and television commentaries and newspaper columns [emphasis added]. The media have become the weapon of a special class rather than serve as a public forum. The so-called 'editorial prerogative' has been used to justify what is best described as "selective journalism."

The freedom of the press is sanctimoniously invoked whenever the work of media criticized. But is its hospitality to the most spurious statements and the most outrageous

¹³ Gleeck, op. cit., 10; Seagrave, op. cit., 115, 121; Steinberg, op. cit., 7.

¹⁴ Gleeck, op. cit., 65; McDougald, op. cit., 189.

allegations a fair step in, say, improving the quality of political debate, or keeping the people well-informed?

There can be no other interpretation of the cry for "radical change" than the alteration of the manner with which we recognize the right to, and enjoyment of, private property. But the media have maintained their high objectivity by not commenting on the issue; they have contented themselves with reporting the statements of constitutional delegates and other public figures, thus displaying and uncharacteristic non-committalness.

The communication revolution has widened human horizons to a considerable degree without providing the world's poor with the means, the technology and resources, to reach out for them. Ironically, the world's poor look to their governments--their leaders and pace-setters--to provide these means for them. *Add to this the unceasing criticism of the Western press of these embattled regimes, compounded with the echo of the local elite, whose perceptions are colored by alien standards, and one appreciates the nearly hopeless plight of besieged societies* [emphasis added].¹⁵

Those statements came at an opportune junction in his country's history. In 1968, national historian and social critic Renato Constantino predicted an apocalyptic armed class struggle stemming from despair and divisiveness caused by the corrupt, decadent status quo. Many other commentators seized on Constantino's predictions, quickly followed by opposition politicians. Marcos also picked up the theme. However, the predictions of doom, overdrawn as they were by those in position to mold opinion, had their effect, for they conditioned the public mind to accept what was to come. The election year 1969 was characterized by more and more fervent calls for revolution, not merely in radical quarters but in what had always been understood to be conservative circles as well. In fact, it seemed a game at which all – media, church, politicians, businessmen, students and perhaps even the president – could play. From 1969 to 1972, it was chic to make revolutionary pronouncements, and Marcos seemed for some months to cooperate, adding Marxists to his administration. It looked as if Marcos, a supremely pragmatic politician, might elect to swim with the Marxist tide. He declared that the Constitution was not a mandate for the status quo, and was denounced as soft on communism.¹⁶

¹⁵ Marcos, Ferdinand E., et al. Toward the New Society: Essays on Aspects of Philippine Development. Malang, Philippines: National Media Production Center, 1974: 6-7, 14, 20.

¹⁶ Chapman, William. Inside the Philippine Revolution. New York City: W.W. Norton & Co., 1987: 91-96; Gleeck, op. cit., 75-76; McDougald, op. cit., 127.

Moreover, in 1970 the government made its own publishing debut with *Government Report*, a weekly distributed free by the President's Office. Its first issue carried the headline, "Can Publishers Foment Disorders?" and went on to say "the national press can no longer be trusted," and therefore, the government had to tell its own story. When he tried to silence the Lopez clan, which controlled the *Manila Chronicle* and a multimedia network through the ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp., they declared war. The *Chronicle* labeled Marcos' New Society a system that enabled the rich and poor "to seek their livelihood from garbage piles." Days later, Vice President Fernando Lopez resigned from his cabinet post as secretary of Agriculture and Natural Resources. Marcos accepted the resignation with a letter denouncing the Lopez family as "a pressure group intent upon the destruction of my development program."¹⁷

Simultaneously, the media had grown increasingly bolder in its operations, with movies increasingly resorting to soft-core pornography, and the stinging criticism, gossip and rumor-mongering prevalent in the press and radio toward government officials and authority figures in general. The media preferred publishing scandals to praising accomplishments and the organization of provincial development committees to promote cooperation between government agencies and the private sector was denounced as a power grab.¹⁸

At the same time, there was genuine fear within the Filipino elite that revolutionary forces had been loosed and that drastic measures were called for. Marcos played skillfully on these fears and did much to heighten them, by concocted government reports of widespread guerrilla strength, and by a series of attacks on government officials in the last two years of Marcos' second term. By Sep. 19, 1972, these attacks provided Marcos the justification he need to declare martial law, while the 1935 Constitution was in limbo as delegates wrangled over a replacement.¹⁹

The Marcos government launched a full-scale justification of martial law and "constitutional authoritarianism" the next morning. The big guns in this campaign were President and Mrs. Marcos, and the Supreme Court chief justice, all of whom delivered lengthy papers seeking to demonstrate not only that martial law and human rights are not incompatible in the Philippines, but that they are, in fact, complementary. The principal

¹⁷ Seagrave, *op. cit.*, 237-238.

¹⁸ Gleeck, *op. cit.*, 62-64, 71-72.

¹⁹ Chapman, *op. cit.*, 91-96; McDougald, *op. cit.*, 127.

argument was that the courts were open to challenges to the martial law system and that all such challenges had resulted in a reaffirmation of the constitutionality of the system. Ferdinand Marcos stated that martial law was being proclaimed in accordance with the 1935 Constitution, that it was not a military takeover of the civilian government; and that this takeover was to be employed in the "reform of society" or the birth of a "New Society." He protested about the oligarchic character of Filipino society. A few families controlled most of the wealth in the Philippines, and he called for a "democratic revolution" to demolish them. He proclaimed, "Let no man invoke friendship or blood kinship to enrich himself or to enhance his position." Marcos called his version of democracy "constitution authoritarianism," but the similar between this and the "constitutional dictatorship" form of government Laurel had used as Japan's puppet president in World War II are striking. However, unlike Laurel, Marcos didn't espouse the merits of totalitarianism and avoided any mention of the word "dictatorship." He knew what he could do with "massive powers, rigidly centralized," and ordered the arrest and detention of people who might have committed the crime of insurrection or rebellion, crimes against national security, the law of nations, the fundamental laws of the state, public order, and crimes involving usurpation of public authority. The "conspirators" all turned out to be his political opponents and journalists who were critical of his regime.²⁰

In the same fashion, they emphasized a false distinction between human rights and property rights. In truth, the distinction is without validity and only serves to arouse envy. The right to own is the mark of a free man. The slave is a slave simply because he is denied that right. And because the free man is secure in the possession and enjoyment of what he produces, and the slave is not, the spur to production is in one and not in the other. Men produce to satisfy their desires and if their gratifications are curbed they cease to produce beyond the point of limitation; on the other hand, the only limit to their aspirations is the freedom to enjoy the fruits of their efforts. That fact, deep-rooted in man's nature, accounts for civilization's progress when and where the right of property is recognized, and for the retrogression that follows from its denial. Property rights and human rights are more than complementary; they're identical.²¹

²⁰ Friends of the Filipino People and the Anti-Martial Law Coalition. Human Rights and Martial Law in the Philippines. Oakland, Calif.: National Resource Center on Political Prisoners in the Philippines, 1977: 11; McDougald, op. cit., 124-126.

²¹ Chodorov, Frank. One is a Crowd: Reflections of an Individualist. New York City: Devin-Adair, 1952: 47-48.

Not that Marcos or anyone else in the government cared. Regardless of the real distinctions, the government broke the power of the traditional oligarchies, and wealth was redistributed – into a tighter circle of cronies and in-laws either in government positions, or with connections to the government. Immediately after seizing power, the first of his presidential decrees included providing funds for public works and declaring the entire nation a land reform area. However, the later would later be stigmatized as the first step in a crony steal of the public domain. A 1973 agreement granted Eduardo Cojuangco, the estranged first cousin of Corazon Aquino and not yet widely identified as a Marcos crony, 16 million hectares of land across the country in exchange for 1.6 million hectares of Cojuangco-owned land, which was to be distributed to tenants under the land reform program. In addition to intervening wherever it wanted, the government allowed business supporters and its own officials to take over vast sections of commerce and industry through favorable legislation and unlimited access to capital and credit. Large segments of the manufacturing sector were protected through import restrictions, the imposition of tariffs, and indirect taxation. There little competition and virtually no free enterprise.²²

Members of the traditional oligarchy were given an early, tacit choice either to support Marcos actively or to lose out both economically and politically. For example, the Lopez family, one of the richest, most powerful families in the archipelago, was systematically broken by Marcos for its failure to support him. One of the Lopez brothers had been Marcos's vice president, and the family had owned the Manila Chronicle, the Manila Electric Co., and innumerable other properties. After martial law was declared, the vice president's nephew, Eugenio Lopez, publisher of the Manila Chronicle, was arrested, along with Sergio Osmena III, the son of Marcos' political rival. With a promise that Eugenio Lopez would be released, the family signed over their Manila Electric Co. in 1974 to interests controlled by the Marcos and Romualdez (Imelda's) families. To make things appear legal the Lopez family received a \$1,500 down-payment for \$20 million worth of shares in the electric company. Marcos granted to Roberto Benedicto, one of the earliest Marcos backers and a chief fundraiser in his 1965 presidential campaign, a sugar monopoly from the seized assets of the Lopez clan and other old-guard sugar barons. Marcos also made him president of the Philippine National Bank. Rodolfo Cuenca, whose father was the public highways commissioner, was a fundraiser for Marcos's 1965 presidential campaign and rewarded with government construction

²² Gleeck, *op. cit.*, 118-119; McDougald, *op. cit.*, 190-191, 201, 218-219; Seagrave, *op. cit.*, 294; Steinberg, *op. cit.*, 128, 132.

contracts. The government also granted Cuenca control of the shipping and construction industries when it nationalized them, and pledged 1 billion pesos to bail out the Construction and Development Corporation of the Philippines, which Cuenca also controlled. Marcos exempted his friend Ricardo Silverio from restrictions placed on all other automobile manufacturers. Marcos by decree drove out of business the competitors of Herminio Disini, a public accountant married to Imelda's personal physician and cousin. The logging and wood-processing industries were nationalized under Marcos and Romualdez relatives; and the airline industries under Romualdez. The Philippine Cement Corp. regulated that industry; the National Food Authority regulated trade in rice, corn, wheat, and other cereals; the Fertilizer and Pesticide Authority regulated those trades; and the National Coal Authority did likewise. In 1973 there were five public utility corporations, seven financial institutions, and 39 other corporations, self-governing boards, commissions, and agencies in the public sector (defined here to cover national and local government and public corporations). By 1982 there were more than 100, and by 1984 there were approximately 260 government-owned or -controlled corporations, of which 45 were listed in the top 1,000 corporations in the Philippines. The Philippines had always officially welcomed foreign investment but very little was ever done to provide a conducive investment. Most foreign companies setting up in the Philippines were forced to accept Filipino partners, with the most attractive partnerships going to those with connections to the government. In 1979, the Technology Resource Center, a government agency, produced a 300-page unpublished manuscript as an effort to criticize and belittle the multinational corporations in the Philippines. At the same time there was a smear campaign conducted by the local corporations.²³

A democratic discussion with the private sector is hobbling to government. Governments are by their nature strong-willed and they believe in their own capacity to make important decisions. Why, then, should they make it difficult for themselves by consulting with the people? Why indeed. For consistency's sake, then, as well for the sake of Hamelink's national sovereignty, the government nationalized the media as well.²⁴

In the Marcos "revolution from the center," the press was the primary target of control. When he declared martial law, Marcos announced that never again would media

²³ McDougald, op. cit., 203, 207, 218-219, 221; Seagrave, op. cit., 284; Steinberg, op. cit., 129.

²⁴ Foundation for Nationalist Studies. Report of the National Press Club Seminar Committee on The State of the Philippine Press. Quezon City, Philippines: Foundation for Nationalist Studies, 1983.

be in the hands of the oligarches and vested interest groups. All newspapers and radio and TV stations were closed and journalists were detained. None were ever brought to trial but overnight 50,000 gainfully employed people were out of work. Only a few were ever allowed to return to their jobs. The government arrested Joachin Roches, publisher of the Manilla Times, who could make or break congressmen or even a president. Saturnino Ocampo, former business editor of the Manila Times and vice president of the National Press Club, was arrested in 1976 on suspicion of being an officer of the Communist Party of the Philippines. He had published articles critical of the Marcos regime. Martial law closed four vernacular and Spanish-language papers, 14 English-language dailies, 60 community newspapers, 66 TV channels, 20 radio stations, 292 provincial radio stations, seven weekly magazines, three business publications, and a news service.²⁵

However, in reality the country's largest newspapers and most powerful broadcast networks were placed in the hands of his friends and relatives. Since publishers and broadcasters were given the apparent authority to regulate and supervise the media industry – and the industry was tightly controlled – the regime was able to declare with a straight face that censorship was non-existent in the New Society.²⁶

The New Society didn't allow criticism. The first presidential decree created the Department of Public Information, and Letter of Instruction No. 1 ordered the immediate seizure and control of all media communications facilities and equipment. Freedom of speech was controlled through a general order: "Any person who shall utter, published distribute, circulate, and spread rumors, false news, and information and gossip ... may be arrested or detained." In the Philippines honest, principled dissenters were arrested because they "undermine the security of the nation." Before martial law no government permit or license was necessary, but on its declaration the Mass Media Council was set up. Headed by Enrile and Public Information Minister Francisco Tatad, its duties included media censorship and licensing. In May 1973 Marcos created the Media Advisory Council, to be replaced a year later by the Print Media Council for newspapers, magazines, periodicals, journals, and publications, and the Broadcast Media Council for radio and television broadcasting.²⁷

²⁵ Foundation for Nationalist Studies, *op. cit.*, 18-19, 33; McDougald, *op. cit.*, 125, 125*n*, 178-179.

²⁶ Foundation for Nationalist Studies, *op. cit.*, 33; McDougald, *op. cit.*, 179.

²⁷ McDougald, *op. cit.*, 131, 177.

By then all the owners and publishers were personal friends and relatives of Marcos. The Philippines Daily Express newspaper, owned by Benedicto, was allowed to open the day after martial law was declared, as was his television station, and the two radio stations. Benedicto later took over the radio and TV network owned by Lopez, which had been seized by the military, and which was later taken over from Benedicto by the government. The former vice president also owned the Manila Chronicle, which was closed down at the martial law's outset. Benjamin Romualdez, Imelda Marcos' brother, took over these facilities, without paying for them, to publish his own newspaper, the Times-Journal. Also seized were facilities of the Manila Times published by the Rocas and Prieto families. The former Manila Daily Bulletin was allowed to open as the Bulletin Today. Its owner, the late Hans Menzi, was a retired brigadier general and former aide-de-camp to Marcos. He was appointed head of the Print Media Council in 1974, and in 1976 had announced that criticism of the Marcoses wouldn't be allowed in newspapers and magazines. Benedicto, Menzi and Romualdez, along with a few other friends, also published some small-circulation dailies.²⁸

Other newspapers weren't so lucky. The Philippine Herald and Manila Times were never allowed to reopen. Even college newspapers, forums where criticism of the government was almost routine and tolerated, were occasionally banned. Foreign media wasn't spared, either. Magazines such as Time, Newsweek, Asiaweek, and the Far Eastern Economic Review were occasionally banned when the government felt their version of events didn't coincide with, or support, the government's version. In 1976, Arnold Zeitlin, Manila bureau chief for The Associate Press, was barred from re-entering the Philippines. According to the government, he had carried out activities which endangered national security and public order. He had also worked for a sinister "foreign organization, or organization than the legitimate media organization he works for." At the time everyone believed that the government had just finally become fed up with Zeitlin's critical stories about the government. A year later, Bernard Wideman, Manila correspondent to The Washington Post and American Broadcasting Co., was informed his visa wouldn't be renewed. His request for an extension had been denied on the grounds that he was an "undesirable alien" and a security risk. The real reason was that he had written some critical articles about Benedicto. Apparently Wideman didn't know friends of Marcos weren't to be criticized.²⁹

²⁸ Foundation for Nationalist Studies, *op. cit.*, 18-19; McDougald, *op. cit.*, 178, 202; Seagrave, *op. cit.*, 284.

²⁹ McDougald, *op. cit.*, 178, 180-181; Seagrave, *op. cit.*, 268.

Before martial law's imposition, newspapermen had been influenced by the biases, prejudices and interests of the publishers. The publishers had their own aims and objectives and the working newspaperman had to work within the parameters of the influence of the publisher. After martial law, the influence of the government had been added, those who chose to publish during the martial-law period had to take into account not only their own objectives but also those of the government.³⁰

Experience has shown that investment in the media is an absolute necessity in order to give the businessman-publisher or the industrialist-publisher a leverage with which to contend with hostile politicians or with a hostile officialdom. What became plain with martial law, therefore, was that the mass-media owners who enjoyed and used their freedom to air or broadcast or telecast acted as equalizers. But even that use was severely limited in the Philippine setting. For in that setting, the economic survival of the native businessman or industrialist was decided by the government. The government issued licenses, almost invariably, at a price to entrepreneurs who wanted to engage in development. And the government controlled the funds and decided when and how much to lend. The result of this quaint and repressive arrangement was subservience on the part of the media, which had to sing the official song of the government.³¹

During the days of martial law, and even after its so-called lifting, it was an almost daily fare for the major dailies to publish government-fed press releases. The wording and sequences of paragraphs were too familiar for the readers not to discern. If there were any differences in the story, these were merely a rehashing of the first paragraphs. "If you've read one paper, you've read all the papers," was a common complaint.³²

Eventually, Marcos felt so secure, he tolerated a level of dissent he wouldn't have permitted in 1973. In 1982 Marcos spoke at a convention of Filipino publishers. He proclaimed that there had been no restrictions on the right of any publication to print in the Philippines since martial law was lifted and wondered aloud at the sad state of the local media. He chided them for relying too much on government press releases, and

³⁰ Foundation for Nationalist Studies, *op. cit.*, 5-6.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 7-8.

³² *Ibid.*, 13.

criticized publications that only praised his administration as well as those that only criticized it.³³

A year after martial law had ended, the U.S. State Department, in its "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1981," reported that "While there is no formal censorship, the media exercise restraint in criticism of government politics. Government information officers sometimes seek to influence or pressure editors on coverage of various topics. One newspaper editor was forced to resign after the government reacted sharply to an article she wrote criticizing President Marcos. The largest newspapers and broadcast facilities are all owned by persons sympathetic to the government."³⁴

The press had lost much of its freedom under martial law either from laziness or lack of initiative to dare. Eight years of taking it easy had dulled the pens of many newsmen. Thus, the technical ending of martial law on Jan. 17, 1981, had really changed nothing, as Marcos had restructured the law to suit his convenience and solidify his total control.³⁵

Little changed in the economy after the People's Revolution of 1986. President Corazon Aquino was unwilling, for example, to break up the hopelessly inefficient telephony monopoly, Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. Not until the election of Fidel Ramos in 1992 has the country begun to experience liberalization of the economy. It remains to be seen if liberalization of the media accordingly develops.³⁶

In short, Hamelink advocates fascist control of the media, although he calls it a new informational structure in the name of national unity and alleviating cultural synchronization. This very form of control, introduced to the United States in the 20th century, and through its colonial period, to the Philippines. Fascism achieved its highest level in the Philippines under martial law, and after, through the Marcos government, some members of which may have approvingly cited Hamelink, if not the other way around. After a decade-and-a-half, that country's inhabitants rejected Hamelink's theories and fascism. Other developing countries haven't been so fortunate.

³³ McDougald, *op. cit.*, 182; Steinberg, 133.

³⁴ McDougald, *op. cit.*, 181.

³⁵ Foundation for Nationalist Studies, *op. cit.*, 46; Steinberg, *op. cit.*, 132.

³⁶ Tanzer, Andrew. "Good-bye to Feudalism." *Forbes* Dec. 5, 1994: 121-128.

