

PHILIPPINE RADIO — HISTORY AND PROBLEMS

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DISCUSSIONS CONCERNING REVOLUTIONARY DETERMINANTS of Philippine society will usually cover a wide range of subjects. Often included in such discussion is the transistor radio,¹ an innovation which has done its revolutionizing predominantly on the local level.

Barrio (small village) folk, traditionally isolated from the outside world, now absorb fresh ideas and keep abreast of national and international developments through transistors. The transistor revolution in the Philippines began in 1959 when CARE donated a few thousand transistors to the barrios. When he asked CARE to donate the radios, President Carlos P. Garcia explained that the radios would combat subversive elements in the rural areas. Why the great emphasis placed on the transistor? What was wrong with the battery or electric radios?

First of all, many barrios in the Philippines do not have electricity; and those having electricity still think of it as a luxury to be used sparingly. In addition, battery radios are prohibitively costly (because of the short life of the expensive batteries) and cumbersome.

Thus, the transistor in some cases has replaced the usual method of getting information — by word of mouth. This method was time-consuming in that it often took two months for information to sift to the barrios from the urban centers. Traditionally, as one source mentioned: "Newspapers, magazines and other written material count for much less in the barrio scheme of communication than the afternoon session at the barrio lieutenant's house; and the morning gatherings at the well or river bank in the case of the woman."²

Although the transistor is still a supplement to the word-of-mouth source of news, villagers are quickly accepting its soap operas, *balagtas* (debates in verse), advice-to-the-lovelorn programs and music fare.

Besides entertaining, another function of the transistor is its usefulness as a status symbol. Barrio people are interested in knowing about city life and the transistor provides such information. The radio seems to strengthen their concept of the big city as a festive, unfriendly place by presenting news of crime, accidents and family problems.

¹ Interviews with Francisco Trinidad, general manager of Philippine Broadcasting Service, Manila; Jose Tierro, program director of CBN, Manila; and Aurelio Javellana, manager of Mindanao Broadcasting, Davao City; 1964-65.

² Roperos, Godofredo, "The transistor revolution," *Manila Times Magazine*, February 11, 1962, p. 10.

Emphasizing the transistor's use in the provinces, the 1961 Collier Report said:

In general, it appeared that the radio itself was somewhat personified. Respondents made such remarks as 'the radio was singing' or the 'radio was talking' when describing their visits to town These attitudes and comments suggest that the radio was accordingly responded to and anticipated as being analogous to a pleasant person who is going to join their social group

In some social situations, it appeared that the sole function of the radio was to furnish a human-like noise as a background for an engrossing activity At a wedding, for example, while the reception activities were in full blossom, the radio was placed on a table near the center of the room. However, the program was a somewhat indistinct sermon given in English by an evangelistic preacher. The volume of the radio was high although the separate words were not clear. No one moved to change the program nor to shut off the radio. Its noise was apparently a welcome addition to the wedding reception.

When there was a party for a baptism, a wedding or some special anniversary, the barrio lieutenant (usually the barrio official entrusted with the barrio's radio) and the radio were invited.³

How did barrio radio exist in pre-transistor days? In his 1957 studies, De Young reported that radio coverage in most barrios was insignificant. Out of 2,668 households sampled, 131 (or 4.8%) owned radios and only 65.6% of the sets were in working condition, according to De Young.⁴ The others were inoperable three to six months a year for lack of batteries. People aware of radio listened to it in the *sari-sari* (grocery) stores and cafes of the *poblacion* (a population unit one step higher than the barrio). Another survey (MacMillan-Rivera) indicated that in 1951 only 3% of provincial households had functioning radios.

To understand Philippine radio — its problems, effects and accomplishments, one must backtrack, all the way to the 1920's. Comparably, Philippine radio is old. In fact, less than two years after KDKA's venture in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Philippine radio had its beginnings. In June, 1922, three 50-watt stations, owned and operated by an electrical supply company, were given temporary permits for stations in Manila and adjoining Pasay. Apparently, an American, Henry Hermann, organized these radio stations. The stations, used mainly for demonstration purposes, were on the air for about two years, with mostly music fare for those few who owned sets, before they were replaced by a 100-watt station, KZKZ. Hermann owned KZKZ too, and operated it from his home. On Oct. 4, 1924, KZKZ was acquired by the Radio Corporation of the Philippines which two months later increased its power to 500 watts. Another station (KZRQ, owned by Far Eastern Radio Inc.) with 500 watt power went on the air in October 1924.

³ Collier, Richard, *Social Aspects of Donated Radios on Barrio Life*, University of the Philippines: Community Development Research Council, 1961.

⁴ De Young, John, *A Study of Communications Problems on Barrio Level*, University of the Philippines, 1957.

A merger of Far Eastern with RCP on Sept. 5, 1925, resulted in the demise of KZKZ, leaving KZRQ as the sole station. Nearly two years later (Sept. 3, 1927), KZRM (one kilowatt) was licensed under RCP but the Philippines still could not support two stations, so it was KZRQ's turn to die and it did so on Oct. 28 of that year. KZRM's power was increased to two kilowatts on Nov. 27, 1928. Yench explained this transaction differently:

In 1927, J. Amado Araneta secured the frequency of 620 kilocycles from the Radio Control Division of the Bureau of Posts and started KZRM. Araneta's company was later called Far Eastern Broadcasting Company... and was later joined by a sister station, KZRF.⁵

Another source⁶ claimed that in 1939 KZRM and KZEG were acquired by Araneta who then owned the DMHM chain of newspapers. Araneta supposedly changed KZEG's call letters to KZRF and kept KZRM's identification. This was the beginning of the trend of later years — newspaper-radio combines. Today, among such cross-channel ownerships are: CBN-ABS-MBS, associated with the *Manila Chronicle*; Associated Broadcasting Company stations, owned by *Manila Times and Manila Daily Mirror*; Inter-Island Broadcasting (Radio Mindanao), *Philippines Herald*; and the station owned by the *Manila Bulletin*.

On Nov. 9, 1925, another station (KZIB) came on the air, a 20-watt station owned by Isaac Beck Inc. The power of KZIB was increased to one kilowatt in 1931 and a one kilowatt shortwave transmitter was added Nov. 19, 1938.

RCP took radio to the provinces in 1929 with the establishment of a one kilowatt station in Cebu City, KZRC. The experiment, which relayed KZRM programs by shortwave to Cebu and there to be rebroadcast by longwave, proved unsuccessful after a few months.

RCP bowed out in 1931, selling its exclusive rights of Philippine distribution of all RCA products and station KZRM to Erlanger and Galinger, Inc. After adding KZEG (one kilowatt) as a sister to KZRM on July 11, 1932, Erlanger and Galinger ran these stations until July 1 1938, when their ownership was transferred to Far Eastern Radio Broadcasting Corporation of Manila.

Another pre-war station was KZRH (ten kilowatt) established by H. E. Heacock Company on July 14, 1939. Samuel Gaches, another American, was the businessman responsible for backing KZRH.

A feature of the four pre-war stations was that they were owned by department stores which used them to advertise merchandise. The motivation behind pre-advertising stations (advertising of companies other

⁵ Yench, John, "The role of radio and TV in the Philippines," American Chamber of Commerce of Philippines *Journal*, December, 1960, pp. 590-600.

⁶ Trinidad, Francisco, "30 years of radio in the Philippines," *Fookien Times Yearbook*, 1956, pp. 143-144, 154.

than the station owners began in 1932) was the stimulation of radio receiver sales.

Radio control laws were promulgated about the same time that radio accepted outside advertisements. According to Francisco Trinidad, one of the pioneers of Philippine radio, in the late 1920's and early 1930's there was an office for radio "but there was no control because the office didn't carry out its functions."⁷ In 1931, the Radio Control Law (Act 3486) was passed enabling the secretary of Commerce and Industry to watch over radio. The law created a regulatory body, the Radio Control Board, and its working arm, the Radio Control Division. These two bodies have since been transferred to the Department of Public Works and Communications.

Radio in the thirties gained almost as much glamour as the movies. Radio personalities became popular as Manila newspapers lavished attention not only on movie stars, but radio personalities as well. The movie industry was relatively new and because there were only a few movies produced compared to the number of radio programs, radio obtained more newspaper publicity. "Sunrise Club," and "Listerine Amateur Hour" were the more popular radio shows.

Programming ran along the same line of a preponderance of purely entertainment programs and a few newscasts. Interviews were unheard of until just two or three years before the outbreak of World War II. More so was a government program unheard of over any radio station. Only the late President Quezon and a few other government officials were ever heard on a broadcast. The war changed all that. It came naturally that with the imminence of the last war, radio was put to more and more use. After all, it was the medium through which we would alert the most people to the immediacy of the fast developing circumstances.⁸

As the Japanese invaded the Philippines, all radio studios were raided, except KZRH, which the Japanese renamed PIAM and used as their voicepiece. "I don't know what PIAM stood for. To the Filipinos it stood for some obscene Tagalog phrase," Trinidad related.⁹

Another source discussed wartime Philippine radio:

Reception on shortwave was strictly forbidden; and to make the ban more effective, radio receiving sets were 'caponized.' But many receiving set owners managed at great risks to hide their sets and/or rewired them after they were 'caponized.' These radio set owners and those living in areas not reached by the Japs continued at much greater risks to listen in on the broadcasts of 'The Voice of Juan de la Cruz,' which unfortunately was shortlived; those of the 'Voice of Freedom' from Corregidor which operated

⁷ Personal interview with Francisco Trinidad, GSIS Building, Manila, June 4, 1965.

⁸ Trinidad, "30 years . . .," *op. cit.*

⁹ Interview, Trinidad, *op. cit.*

until its fall in May, 1942; and those of the 'Voice of America' throughout the occupation period.¹⁰

The underground newspapers depended heavily upon the hidden radio sets for their information of the war. One guerrilla, for example, listened to radio twenty-four hours a day, alternating with his wife so as to get all the news possible for the mimeographed guerrilla sheets.¹¹

A San Francisco station was the main "legitimate" source of news for Filipinos. Because of the Japanese censorship, Filipinos had to depend on San Francisco for news happening right in Manila. Stenographic notes of this station's news digests and commentaries were surreptitiously distributed throughout the islands. Carbon copies of the notes were sold at fantastic prices despite the fact they were death warrants for anyone caught with them.

The Philippine liberation of 1945 heralded the real birth of broadcasting in the archipelago. Whereas before the war, approximately twenty years elapsed before one could count five stations; within five years after the war, one could count thirty stations.

Because of the large number of applications for broadcast permits, Congress enacted Commonwealth Act 729 on July 2, 1946, which gave the President of the Philippines a four-year right to grant temporary permits for the establishment of stations. Previous to this, no station could be set up without first getting the franchise from Congress — sometimes a very tedious procedure which tended to retard radio growth. Another all-encompassing radio act was passed in 1947 stipulating that stations change their first call letter from 'K' to 'D' so as not to be confused with United States call letters. Today, call letters 'DZ' stand for Luzon stations, 'DY' for Visayan and 'DX' for Mindanao.

The main problem with radio in the immediate post-war period was the lack of receivers. More receivers seemed to be concentrated in the provinces than in Manila. This resulted during the war when Manila people, needing food money, sold their sets cheaply to the provincianos.¹² Rehco (Radio Electronic Headquarters Co.) in 1949 partially alleviated the lack of receivers problem when it started to make receiving sets. By 1953, Rehco was producing about 300 sets a month. Rehco's was not the first attempt at producing receivers locally; in 1936, an American automobile importer set up a plant to make local radios from imported parts. The idea failed because he used the trade name "Mabuhay"

¹⁰ Mimeographed report by Castañeda found in Francisco Trinidad's files. (Permission granted.)

¹¹ Lear, Elmer, *Japanese Occupation of the Philippines*, Data Paper 42, Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, Ithaca, 1961.

¹² Chanco, Mario, "Commercial Broadcasting in Manila," *American Chamber of Commerce Journal*, November 1946, pp. 6-7, 20.

(Welcome) and brand-conscious Filipinos didn't trust a locally-assembled radio.¹³

The first broadcasting system on the air after liberation was KZFM, a 50-watt station operated first by the Office of War Information, later by the United States Information Service and still later by the Republic of the Philippines.¹⁴ KZFM, which went on the air three months after liberation, was named for Frederic Marquardt, an American newsman on the pre-war *Philippines Free Press* who returned with MacArthur's troops. When the station was turned over to the Philippine government twenty years ago, President Roxas initiated a revolving fund of \$100,000 (U.S.) for its operation. Today, DZFM is the government station — an entity that is partially subsidized and partially paid for by commercial advertising.

In 1946, two additional stations appeared — pre-war KZRH and DZPI, a post-war extension of the Far Eastern Broadcasting's KZRF. Both were commercially operated, and both, three days after they opened, sponsored on-the-spot coverage of the Philippine inaugural ceremonies. Competing very keenly, they both opened sister stations — DZRH initiated DZMB and DZPI established DZOK.

Post-war provincial radio had its debut when the Cebu Broadcasting Company opened DYRC on Sept. 21, 1947. DYRC was followed shortly after by DYBU.

Big business interests were responsible for some of the first post-war commercial stations. For example, the Elizalde companies supported Manila Broadcasting Company's DZRH, and Soriano businesses, along with Ramon Roces, magazine chain owner, inaugurated DZPI. In 1949, Manila Broadcasting Company and the Philippine Broadcasting System merged, making DZRH-DZPI-DZMB the strongest combine in the Philippines at the time. Twelve years later, MBC-PBC owned 13 stations broadcasting in Chinese, English, Spanish and the Bicol, Cebuano, Ilocano, Ilongo and Waray dialects.

Also in that year, the genesis of the largest broadcasting chain in the Philippines was taking place. The then newly-formed Bolinao Electronics Corporation opened station DZBC in 1949, starting what eventually became the Alto Broadcasting System — Chronicle Broadcasting Network — Monserrat Broadcasting System organization, owned by the many Lopez business enterprises. An American, James Lindenberg, founded Bolinao but sold out in the early fifties to Judge Antonio Quirino, brother

¹³ Anonymous, "Locally made radios," *Chronicle Magazine*, November 22, 1953, pp. 4, 7.

¹⁴ Another source claims WVLC was the first post-war station, established in March 1945. Transmitting from a radio shop in Manila, WVLC was directly under MacArthur's command. It was short-lived, having been replaced by WVTM, a station sent to the islands from the United States. (Trinidad, Luis, "The role of radio in Philippine entertainment," *Chronicle Magazine*, November 21, 1964, pp. 26-27).

of the Philippine president at that time, who later sold to Lopez. Bolinao originally obtained the radio franchises for political purposes; they hoped to elect a man to office and then quietly let the station die. But because of the popularity of their disc jockeys, Bolinao stations stayed on the air. Eugenio Lopez entered the picture in 1956 when he organized CBN and three stations in Manila. He then proceeded to buy out Quirino and his Bolinao interests. Today, the CBN-ABS-MBS owns at least thirty stations throughout the islands.

Programming was flavored with a colonial mentality in the first post-war years, most shows being canned United States serials. DZRH initiated the first successfully sponsored local shows — Philippine Manufacturing Company's "Purico Show," and "Kuwentong Kapitbahay." The latter was the first soap opera in Tagalog. The Tagalog show, "Kapitan Kidlat," a Philippine-type Superman, also encouraged the use of live programming.

Famous for its on-the-spot news coverage was Republic Broadcasting's DZBB, started by Bob Stewart on March 1, 1950. DZBB's news show contribution included "Newscoop" made up of controversial individuals discussing "hot" subjects. On one occasion featuring a debate between two arch-rival politicians, over 10,000 people lined the streets outside the studio to witness the action. Each politician had twenty unarmed bodyguards in the studio for protection. Outside, police frisked everyone because they feared gang warfare. The politicians debated for 3½ hours, swearing at each other over the air.¹⁵

One evaluator said of radio programming in 1952:

Radio stations stay on the air eighteen hours of every twenty-four and as far as some people are concerned, their only difference with nagging wives is that the latter don't cost a cent to hear. On the other hand, a much bigger number of loyal listeners prize their radio sets for the unexpensive entertainment and information they get from them.

Even radio people themselves agree that of their eighteen hours on the air only a few are spent on broadcasting really worthy programs. So much time is spent polluting the air lanes with cheap, morbid, unintelligent programs. They rationalize on this failure by saying that is what the public wants, which is the bitter truth. A few years back when the announcement was made that radio was here to stay, everybody was happy... Now, with programs what they are, there are desperate moments when frustrated radio reformants aren't so sure they want it to stay.¹⁶

Among the many complaints of radio then: commercials were sneaked into program scripts, announcers tried to sound like Americans,

¹⁵ Ty, Leon, "Newscoop," *Philippines Free Press*, December 31, 1955, pp. 5, 53.

¹⁶ Granada, Ernesto, "Radio's adolescent troubles," *Freedom*, September 20, 1952, pp. 7-8, 21.

shows were horror-filled and frightening.¹⁷ As for newscasts, they sounded as though the newscasters were reading the latest newspaper verbatim, "which is in fact the case and the newscasters make no bones about it."¹⁸ First hand gathering of the news being too expensive for most radio stations, they clipped stories out of newspapers and dramatized them for broadcast. Other times, to get the news, stations conducted interviews of newsworthy persons by a panel of newspapermen.

By the early fifties, commentators on current events became popular, chief of whom was (and still is) Rafael Yabut, who gained a following for his irreverent treatment of the foibles of government officials. No less than twenty programs featuring political opinion were aired daily by Manila's six leading stations in 1953. Although they all preached neutrality, most were "but thinly veiled propaganda for either political party."¹⁹ In most cases, they were paid for by political factions.

According to a Philippine Radio Survey Association poll, the most popular live talent show of this period was "Kuwentong Kutsero," a satire on Filipino manners, politics, customs and government. It was aired first in 1938. Other popular shows were "Kami Naman," a situation comedy; "Vicks' Variety Show"; and the "Camay Theatre of the Air."²⁰

Other significant changes in post-war radio were the language of broadcasts and the extension of broadcasting to the provinces. Whereas in the pre-war and early post-war eras, 90% of radio programming was in English, by the mid-fifties, the trend reversed itself to more use of Tagalog.

An indication of the proliferation of provincial radio was Cebu (population 251,000) which had 13 radio and three television stations by 1964. These stations were owned or developed by Manila networks (CBN-ABS-MBS, two stations; Republic, one; Radio Mindanao, one) as well as local outfits (Cebu Broadcasting, three; Visayas-Mindanao, one; Central Philippine Broadcasting, one; Abellana National School, one). Many of the stations lose money and depend on funds from their mother networks or from election advertisements every two years.

Why do provincial cities have so many radio stations as compared to the number of newspapers? Reuben Canoy, Cagayan de Oro City pioneer in radio, explained that radio is easier to organize than newspapers. He added: "You can get ads for radio and also there is not

¹⁷ Riego, Socorro, "Our 'DZ' programs," *Weekly Women's Magazine*, February 19, 1954, p. 11.

¹⁸ Granada, *op. cit.*

¹⁹ Granada, Ernesto, "The political stump on your dial," *Freedom*, April 13, 1953, pp. 9, 30.

the need for as many staff members as newspapers. Of course, people who can't read can listen."²¹

Examples of provincial radio's rapid growth are evident in Cagayan de Oro City and Davao City. Cagayan (city of 80,000 in northern Mindanao) has five stations, two owned by Radio Mindanao (DXVM and DXCC), and one each by Mindanao Broadcasting Company (DXMO), Xavier University (DXXU) and Manila Broadcasting (DXRC). Canoy felt the number of stations would double in Cagayan de Oro City within five years. Their chief programming fare? Soap operas. The owners of one Cagayan de Oro station didn't think it unusual that they broadcast as many as fifteen soap operas daily.²²

The first station in Davao City (DXAW) was opened in 1949 by A. J. Wills, a U.S. Army communications man who used surplus material to start his station. Stations in Davao City now are: ABS-CBN's DXAW, DXWW and DXLD; Mindanao Broadcasting's DXMC, DXMM, DXHC and DXUM; Mindanao Times' DXMT; Philippine Herald's DXDC; Liberty Broadcasting's DXGE and the government's DXRP.

Nationally, the last ten years has seen a burgeoning of stations until today there are approximately 150. As late as 1959, there were only from 47-52 stations in the islands, 17-20 of which were in Manila. Manila now has about 30 stations.

Herein lies one of the biggest problems of Philippine broadcasting — overcrowding. Advertising cannot support the large number of stations, many of which survive only by waiting for election revenue every two years.

Radio's growth, because of the transistor, has been predominantly in the provinces. Most Manila broadcasting organizations have established provincial stations, among them CBN-ABS-MBS, MBC-PBC, Republic, Associated, Inter-Island. In an effort to capitalize on the growing provincial markets, stations in the vicinity of Manila have been uprooted and transplanted. But they are usually transplanted or developed in larger provincial metropolitan areas, thus glutting these markets and still not reaching the remote farming areas.²³

²⁰ Granada, "Radio's adolescent. . .," *op. cit.*

²¹ Personal interview with Reuben Canoy, Cagayan de Oro City, December 12, 1964.

²² Personal interview with Raul Ortega, Manila Broadcasting Company, Cagayan de Oro City, December 12, 1964.

²³ The station personnel claim they cannot put stations in remote areas which do not have electricity. Trinidad thinks it is because the stations never learned to work in emergencies and added that this is ironical in a nation where typhoon emergencies develop frequently. (Trinidad interview, *op. cit.*) Tierro points out that in some areas electricity is on only from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. He adds that Manila stations cover the whole of the country at various times of the day. (Tierro interview, *op. cit.*)

Problems of provincial, as well as Manila, radio may be gleaned if we observe the headaches of one city (Davao City). These are: 1. Overcrowding. Davao City has nine stations serving approximately 800,000 people and 83,000 radio homes in the Davao Province; 2. Soap operas. Advertising money is usually fed to entertainment programs, especially the soap operas and inane joke shows; 3. Poor taste advertising. Because advertising is relatively scarce on the provincial level, stations must accept nearly all ads, whether in good taste or not; 4. Language. Two of the Davao announcers, for example, can't use English correctly, mixing it occasionally with vernacular tongues; 5. Programming. Shows popular in the United States and Europe twenty years ago are in vogue in Davao now; 6. Ownership. Many stations are either affiliated with or owned by Manila groups, some of which do not understand provincial radio problems.²⁴

Despite the large number of radio schools, there is a lack of training among radio personnel, creating still further problems. For example, most Philippine newscasters, to improve their images, concentrate on voicing and completely neglect news gathering and writing. "Young broadcasters are trained on the job. Some colleges here offer radio courses but the instruction is not attuned to the actual broadcasting conditions of the nation. In most cases, non-radio people are teaching the courses. At CBN, we feel the best training is on the job with us," one broadcaster said.²⁵

Canoy adds other problems to the list:

1. Irresponsible newsmen and/or rabble-rousing commentators. The type of people Philippine radio gets are those who have voices or style but don't have the brains for newscasting

2. Distribution of radios to barrios. When battery radios were being used, the cost of battery replacement was prohibitive, as much as \$7.50 a month. Now, transistors cost about 38 cents a month. Distribution of the governmental and CARE free radios is handled by barrio captains who are a little more responsible. When the free distribution began a few years ago, the captain distributed the radios to people who would do him a favor in turn.

3. Money. Advertisers have limited budgets. Because of the rapid sprouting of many stations, competition has become keen. You get a temporary permit for an area but someone can invade that area with another station. There is no franchise as such. The radio set-up is full of corruption. You have to bribe people for a license for any given area and yet the license is not effective.²⁶

Of course, there are encouraging aspects of Philippine radio. A few examples will suffice. Radio has helped unify the people, having

²⁴ Personal interview with Aurelio Javellana, manager of Mindanao Broadcasting System, Davao City, December 14, 1964.

²⁵ Interview, Tierro, *op. cit.*

²⁶ Interview, Canoy, *op. cit.*

taught them the national language, Tagalog. In August, 1959, a movement was initiated by the Philippine Broadcasting Service and the Bureau of Public Schools, to broadcast educational programs for teachers and pupils. This public service has been important in a nation where two-thirds of the more than 3½ million school children attend poorly equipped barrio schools.

Canoy in Cagayan and Javellana in Davao reported using their stations more and more for community service — finding lost children, teaching agricultural methods and the like.

If someone loses a carabao (water buffalo), we try to locate it for him. If a farmer gets to town and can't get home, we broadcast a message so informing his family. We even broadcast names of people who must report to court the following day. It's all part of the big problem in the Philippines — poor communications. There is no good mail or telephone system here so radio is used.²⁷

Provincial radio's growth has run counter to the impressions of many radio personnel who for years felt the best way to reach the masses was by broadcasting from Manila. "These people had always thought the aura of the big city of Manila had a special place in the provinciano's heart — that he wanted his radio entertainment and information to emanate from Manila and not from the provincial city," was the way Nitoy Escano, Manila sales director of CBN-ABS-MBS put it.²⁸ Escano added that provincianos couldn't believe they were about to have their own station; in Zamboanga City (40,000 population) people at first thought they had to pay to tune in to the local station.

How widespread is radio receiver ownership in the Philippines? What is the average listenership? How are programming and advertising handled now? In 1951 there were 79,000 sets (4 per 1,000 people); 1954, 217,000 (10 per 1,000); 1957 305,000 (22 per 1,000) and 1959, 600,000.²⁹ Of the 4,692,000 Philippine homes in the early 1960's, 31% were covered by radio, 20% by the press and 2% by television.³⁰ A 1962 Robot Survey found that 26% of Philippine homes had radio sets, that there were 1.5 million sets in the islands. Where are these sets concentrated? Who owns them? The fact that in Rizal Province (surrounds Manila) 50% of the homes have radio whereas in Albay Province (southern Luzon) only 4% have radio indicates that set ownership is massed near urban centers. An Index Survey in 1963 showed a high radio ownership rate in socio-economic classes "C" and "D" which are middle to lower middle classes. Of

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Personal interview with Nitoy Escano, sales director of CBN-ABS-MBS, Manila, June 3, 1965.

²⁹ UNESCO, *World Communications*, Paris: UNESCO, 1951, 1956, 1964.

³⁰ Advertising and Marketing Association, *Facts and Figures on the Philippine Market*, Manila: AMA, 1963.

course the "A" and "B" classes (over \$250 per month) also own radio sets but they are used by the housemaids; the family in such cases prefers to view television.³¹

Although programming has been uplifted with the use of more live shows and less noise, there are still numerous cases of poor newscasts read from newspapers and of immoral and unethical shows. It might be said that programming has improved slightly since this criticism was written:

A few years ago, there was too much noise on radio. If it wasn't rock and roll, it was fabricated hysteria courtesy of the gag writers who think of a world of wailing and screeching, and announcers who justify the playing of a two-minute record with a 'clever' five minute introduction.³²

A hindrance to good broadcasting over the years has been the *bakya* mentality which permeates the lower income classes—a mentality that "favors stories about illegitimate children, forsaken wives, abused women, moribund fathers, poor girls and rich boys, poor boys and rich girls, stories where the leading lady alternates between singing and weeping. . . ."³³ The *bakya* crowd has been used by radio, television, and movie personnel as an excuse for the showing of poor programs.

Trinidad explained the *bakya* rationalization:

We are trying to lift the tastes of the bakya crowd now. Before World War II, we had taste in radio. Stations had their full orchestras; there were visiting artists. There is no semblance between present radio tastes and those of pre World War II. The rapid growth of radio and the need for more people to work it (thus an influx of unqualified personnel) have lowered the tastes. Probably 80% of present day announcers would never have made it in pre-war days. The rationalization given by media people that the bakya crowd only wants the type of trash they now get is a foolish notion. This same bakya crowd they talk about now, was the one we lifted the tastes of in pre-war years. I get very resentful when I hear a media man say the bakya tastes cannot be raised. This rationalization makes of all Filipinos, nimcompoops.³⁴

Philippine media personnel feel the *bakya* crowd wants and needs the soap opera formula for entertainment. That they give the people what they want was emphasized in a 1964 survey which showed that in a twelve-hour broadcast day, four hours are devoted to soap opera, three to music, three to conversation, one to news and one to commercials. Ninety per cent of the music broadcast was dance music, with very little listening, classical or semi-classical fare.

³¹ Polson and Pal, *Status of Rural Life in Dumaguete City Trade Area*, Data Paper 21, Cornell University, Ithaca, 1956, p. 18.

³² Castañeda, Bessie, "Outlook for radio and TV," *Saturday Mirror Magazine*, October 22, 1960, pp. 18-19.

³³ Avellana, Lamberto, "The cinema in the Philippines," *Unitas*, September 1963, pp. 382-386.

³⁴ Interview, Trinidad, *op. cit.*

One source capsuled Philippine radio programming this way:

Soap operas rule the wave lengths... the next type of popular radio fare is emceed music

The radio station that jumps with the latest tunes, that talks the language of the people, that tells stories about the people—this gets a high preference on the dial.

The soap operas reaffirm the values of the people. The imported music expresses the deeper longings of the people. The long suffering mother, the jilted sweetheart, the uncaring lover form the main characters of a soap opera...³⁵

An attempt at giving the people what they need rather than what they want was CBN's 24-hour-a-day news program in 1956. The station, first of its kind in the islands, had complete editorial and reportorial staffs day and night, plus all wire facilities. "But the people didn't accept this concept of radio," according to Escano. "People are not too news-conscious in the Philippines. Provincial listeners are quite news-conscious but because of a lack of monitoring systems, we can't get the information to the provinces. And provincial stations can't afford to have wire services; if they could, wire services are received poorly in the provinces anyway,"³⁶ he added.

Other sources, especially Trinidad, have explained it differently. Because radio and newspapers often are owned by the same combines, the two media will not knock each other by competing for the news. "If the newspaper claims it is tops and first with the news, radio won't challenge. They are not working for the good of mass communication; they are working for commercialism,"³⁷ Trinidad said.

Another complaint of radio is the large number of commercials, many of which are offensive. During election years, there are usually persistent controversies about the amount of money politicians spend on radio advertising.

The most expensive broadcast time rate is on DZXL (CBN) — \$150 (US per hour in "A" time (6-9) or 10 p.m.). The main source of revenue for radio advertising is the soap opera, sponsored by such corporations as Colgate, Procter-Gamble, Lever Brothers, the cigarette, milk and gas companies. Spot advertisements, not full-show sponsorships, account for the majority of the revenue. Spots, of course, are bought on various lengths (5 to 60 seconds) and aired at times not occupied by sponsored programs. Some typical costs are: a 60-second spot on prime time is 5-10 (U.S. dollars) in Manila and 50 cents to \$4.50 (U.S.) on provincial stations.

³⁵ Peña, C. P., "Radio's expansive role," *Saturday Mirror Magazine*, April 4, 1964, p. 14.

³⁶ Interview, Escano, *op. cit.*

³⁷ Interview, Trinidad, *op. cit.*

One critic of radio advertising³⁸ has said that Philippine radio is under the control of advertisers and ad agencies. Stations cannot pre-censor any program paid for by a sponsor but they can cut anything immoral, irreligious or seditious. Broadcasting people hesitate to cut shows because of the threat of breach of contract charges from the advertiser. Therefore, almost anyone or anything can get on the air. In extreme cases when a station does cut an immoral show, nothing can be broadcast in that time as fill-in; the time belongs to the original sponsor. A few years ago, a sponsor kept lampooning the Chinese (a minority group in the Philippines) but the station couldn't act until the sponsor's contract expired.³⁹

The Radio Control Board has tried to combat libelous, obscene shows by requiring stations to keep tapes of their programs for review purposes. The rule has been ineffective because no stations can afford to purchase that many tapes for storage of information only.

During election years, politically-sponsored programs oftentimes outweigh other commercially paid shows. Even a higher proportion of time is given to political messages in the provinces, mainly because the time does not cost as much.

The Commission on Elections, fearing radio advertising's effect on political campaigns, attempted to remedy the situation by asking that all candidates be given equal air time. The ruling has not worked; first, it applied only in regard to free time, paid advertising time did not have to be equal. Second, as Suarez explained:⁴⁰ "As for the commission ruling that there can only be certain amounts of political advertising for any one candidate, this is impossible to carry out as friends of candidates will advertise on the air for the candidate." An example of the law's ineffectiveness was a 1961 incident where a candidate for president bought out an entire station's programming. Trinidad pointed out other unfair political advertising practices:

In the 1957 elections, Lopez stations practiced unfairly. For example, they would sell time to the opposition (Liberal Party) but they'd sandwich it in between two programs which were for Lopez sponsored Nacionalista Party candidates. They'd also give free time to their own candidate and then claim that the time was bought when the opposition also sought free time.⁴¹

Apparently, the 1957 elections produced a number of unethical broadcast practices. Republic Broadcasting's DZXX was ordered investigated for "libelous political remarks broadcast like regular programs every one

³⁸ Tumalak, Nicasio, "The sad state of radio commercials," *This Week*, February 10, 1962, pp. 22-23.

³⁹ Yench, *op. cit.*

⁴⁰ Personal interview with Antonio Suarez, provincial sales manager, CBN-ABS-MBS, Manila, June 1, 1965.

⁴¹ Interview, Trinidad, *op. cit.*

half hour with no mention they were ads.”⁴² Among these statements were charges that certain presidential candidates were pro-Communist, anti-Catholic and anti-democracy.

Because of the unprecedented amount political parties spent advertising on radio that year (at least \$500,000 U.S.), the Commission on Elections thought of prosecuting certain candidates for overspending and holding station owners in contempt of the Commission for accepting all the advertisements. The action it finally took, however, was to demand all broadcast media to submit names of candidates and parties that bought time and the amount they bought. Specifically, the Commission required that a candidate could not spend more on his campaign than the sought position would pay him in a year.

The radio industry itself has talked a lot about regulating advertising programming excesses, but very little has been accomplished. Codes of ethics have been proposed but to little avail. The undersecretary of Public Works in 1957 deplored radio’s standards, for example, in his statement that radio commentators could attack any government official without restraint and then hide behind the “so-called freedom of speech.”⁴³

In efforts to crack down on radio excesses, the government occasionally has been accused of gagging tactics. In 1947, a controversial announcer’s program was discontinued after the Department of National Defense threatened to cancel the station’s permit if the announcer continued to broadcast.⁴⁴ Four years later, President Quirino was blamed for trying to gag radio when he ordered the Radio Control Board to watch stations that might be using seditious material to undermine the people’s faith in government.⁴⁵

Other complaints have been voiced during subsequent administrations — during the Garcia reign, it was said that anti-Garcia commentators were cut off the air and that radio time was bought up by “paid propagandists of the administration.”⁴⁶ In 1959, congressmen uncovered what they termed administration censorship of the government-owned radio station.

An incident that stirred tremendous controversy was the Radio Control Division’s raiding and confiscating of transmitting equipment of the nineteen radio stations owned by Lopez. The RCD claimed the stations

⁴² Anonymous, “Moreno sets probe on radio station,” *Manila Chronicle*, November 1, 1957, pp. 1, 17.

⁴³ Anonymous, “Code of ethics for radio urged,” *Manila Chronicle*, June 30, 1957, p. 22.

⁴⁴ Lacson, Antonio, “Lacson to Soriano,” *Newspaperman*, October 1947, pp. 20-21.

⁴⁵ Anonymous, “Quirino explains radio gag order,” *Manila Chronicle*, December 8, 1951, pp. 1, 10.

⁴⁶ Anonymous, “Pelaez insists NP government gagging radio critics,” September 30, 1959, p. 18.

were operating without licenses and violating government rules. The Supreme Court said RCD could not confiscate a radio's transmitter without a hearing.

The Radio Control Board has frequently been scrutinized for its inability to regulate broadcasting. "Rampant refusal of stations to obey rules couldn't go on without help from some RCB people who perform special services for a fee for some stations," a newspaper⁴⁷ reported in 1963. A broadcast executive said: "Seventy-five per cent of Philippine radio stations do not observe the RCB's rules. But when the RCB needs something, they make the rules stick against you, a kind of blackmail. In 1961 and 1963, near election times, we'd get an RCB inspector nearly every week. This was to more or less harass us to support a certain political party."⁴⁸

The radio regulation chief, Roberto San Andres, has criticized the radio regulatory bodies as out of date. He pointed out that rules are not structured to fit modern trends, frequency assignments are not strictly observed, violators of radio laws have never been brought to court and thoroughly prosecuted and legitimate applications for radio frequencies have taken years to process.⁴⁹ Since then, the Radio Control Division has made a few attempts to modernize standards; a research division was created to keep the RCD abreast of modern methods; a plan for frequency assignments was initiated and frequency applications are being processed in a more streamlined manner.

What does the future hold for radio? When one realizes that there are farmers who plow fields with transistors strapped over their shoulders, that in Mindanao tuba (a coconut flower drink) gatherers climb from tree to tree humming songs that come from transistors in their pockets, that children from the most rural regions know the advertising jingles; it is obvious that radio is a popular and far-reaching medium. In a nation made up of 7,000 islands, a medium is needed that can reach anywhere. So far, radio is the only one capable of this.

⁴⁷ Anonymous, "RCO men face charges," Manila *Evening News*, January 22, 1963, p. 10.

⁴⁸ Interview, Canoy, *op. cit.*

⁴⁹ San Andres, Roberto, "Radio and television in the Philippines," *Fookien Times Yearbook*, 1962, pp. 225-226.