

# The Philippine Guerilla Movement and Counterpropaganda During World War II

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*This essay describes the forms of counterpropaganda of the guerilla movement during the Japanese Occupation particularly in the guerilla newspapers which were an integral part of the underground resistance movement. Combining historical research and content analysis of three guerilla newspapers in the Visayas where the resistance was the strongest -- the **Leyte Samar Free Philippines**, **The Coordinator** and **Ang Tigbatas**, the study analyzes how the guerilla newspapers kept the Filipino people informed about war developments and boosted their morale. With their emphasis on news, these guerilla newspapers despite their lack of polish and limited resources, effectively met the needs of the Filipinos and countered the massive Japanese propaganda machinery.*

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## Introduction

When war broke out on December 8, 1941, the Philippines was automatically at war with Japan for two reasons: (1) the war involved the United States (US) and Japan, and the Philippines was under the former; and (2) the Philippines was bombed and invaded on the same day.

The war called for complete coverage by various newspapers and radio stations, with each eager to bring to the people the latest developments on the event that was affecting nearly half of the world. But those who were left in the newspapers and the radio stations could not go on disseminating the news that they wanted to reach the people, especially when the Philippines came under the Japanese occupation. The once free press fell under the total control and censorship of the invaders.

On January 2, 1942 when the Japanese entered Manila, two major publications, *The Philippines Free Press* and the *Manila Daily Bulletin*, were closed down. The TVT chain, composed of the *Manila Tribune*, *Vanguardia*, and *Taliba*, continued publication primarily because its owner, Alejandro Roces Sr., was forced to allow the Japanese to use his facilities (Jose, n.d.: 12) Nevertheless, the contents were drastically changed, to the point that the readers found them unbelievable. The other publications soon followed either one of two courses: close down, or operate under strict Japanese surveillance. Almost all chose the first option.

However, there were a number of journalists and broadcasters who fled to the hills and joined the guerrilla forces which constituted the armed resistance during the Japanese occupation. This resistance movement which started in early 1942 had two components: the physical and the ideological (Agoncillo, 1941: 18). The physical aspect of the movement was represented by the scattered guerrilla units which skirmished with and staged attacks against superior Japanese forces. The exploits of these guerrillas and the tactics they employed might have been daring but the other component of this resistance movement was likewise daring and significant. This was represented by the counterpropaganda corps which sought means to counteract Japanese propaganda.

What forms did this counterpropaganda take? What kind of information was churned out by this counterpropaganda corps? What was their role, if any, in the resistance movement? A number of articles and personal accounts may have given sketchy answers to these questions. But it is the aim of this paper to integrate and interpret existing documents that may well provide clearer answers, and thus shed light on the role played by counterpropaganda during World War II. Also, this paper hopes to add to the existing works on World War II in the Philippines by giving a more detailed account of the guerrilla newspapers, their publishers and writers, as well as providing a content analysis of selected guerrilla newspapers.

## **Research Methodology**

The study is primarily a descriptive one using the historical approach and the content analysis as methods of research. The historical study was done using books, magazine articles, unpublished works, and other available documents on World War II. One such work was an undated paper of Ricardo J. Jose which included a listing of guerrilla newspapers. Elmer Lear's annotated bibliography of World War II documents likewise proved to be useful in locating materials used for this paper.

The content analysis, on the other hand, was used to provide a description of the underground mass media during World War II. A systematic content analysis was done on three guerrilla newspapers: *The Coordinator*, *Ang Tigbatas*, and *Leyte-Samar Philippines*. Only these three newspapers were found to have copies sufficient for the purpose of content analysis. The cutoff date of the content analysis was set for March 1945 as major parts of the country were already liberated by that time, and hence, the mass media was freer. Copies of other guerrilla newspapers as well as some leaflets and pamphlets circulated during the war years were likewise described for this paper.

Aside from the content analysis, interviews were conducted with the late Dean Armando J. Malay, Ricardo Jose, noted historian and professor at the University of the Philippines, and Proculo Mojica, a member of the Hunter's Guerillas. These interviews yielded information and opinions valuable to the researcher.

The search for materials took the researcher to the libraries of the University of the Philippines, National Library, Ateneo de Manila University, Central Philippine University, Lopez Memorial Foundation, Thomas Jefferson Cultural Center, American Historical Association collection, and the private library of Dean Armando J. Malay.

## Discussion of Findings

### *Japanese propaganda*

Successful propaganda requires total control of the mass media. This principle was accepted and exploited by the astute. To make sure that Japanese ideas would take root, the Japanese assumed control of all means of communication, especially the mass media. Thus, the once free and flourishing media was stifled.

The task of propagating Japanese culture and ideas was assigned to the Propaganda Corps of the Japanese Army which was created in October 1942 and renamed Department of Information of the Imperial Japanese forces (Hartendorp, 1967: 464). This was headed by Col. Nakashima, who declared:

Our policy is very emphatically, not to stifle or curtail freedom of speech or of the press, but on the contrary to encourage and give support to the formation and expression of a conscientious and constructive public opinion in the Philippines. It is our desire to foster the dissemination of correct and truthful news and information to the mass of the people. (Hartendorp, 1967: 464)

But as history would show, this was far from the reality.

### *Newspapers and magazines*

When the Japanese entered Manila on January 2, 1942, they immediately took over the TVT publications. The January 3, 1943 issue of the *Manila Tribune*, one of the most widely read dailies at that time, came out under the editorship of a Japanese named Isogai (Soriano, 1948: 145).

With the Japanese in charge of the *Tribune*, changes in format and contents were introduced. Articles published tried to convince the Filipinos that everything was normal. They

emphasized the gains by Japan and other Axis forces, and glossed over their losses in the hands of the Allied forces. The *Tribune* also published articles on guerrilla surrenders, government orders and proclamations and price control measures (Jose, n.d.: 7).

Three weeks after the Japanese took over the publication of the *Tribune*, the two other newspapers of the TVT chain – *La Vanguardia* and *Taliba* – came out again (Soriano, 1948: 145). In contrast, the DMHM (*El Debate*, *Monday Post*, *The Philippines Herald*, and *Mabuhay*) chain could not resume publication since their offices had been bombed by Japanese airplanes on the day the Japanese entered Manila.

On October 12, 1942, the *Manila Sinbun-sya* was established under the leadership of Masao Matsuka (Soriano, 1948: 147). *Manila Sinbun-sya* assumed custody of Philippine newspapers and magazines.

The November 1, 1942 issue of *Tribune* carried this announcement:

The *Manila Sinbun-sya* will publish the *Manila Sinbun* (Japanese language), beginning today, and will continue to issue the *Tribune* (English), the *Taliba* (Tagalog), and *La Vanguardia* (Spanish), - the former TVT newspapers and the *Liwayway* (Tagalog Weekly) and the *Shinseiki* (monthly pictorial). In addition *Manila Sinbun-sya* has taken under its management the *Davao Nichi Nichi* at Davao, the *Bicol Herald* at Legaspi and other publications.

The new company has been established for the purpose of further clarifying the invulnerable position of the Nippon Empire, now in the midst of the creation of the New Order in greater East Asia, of making more thoroughly understood the purpose of the Military Administration in the Philippines, and of propelling with greater force the materialization of the New Philippines. (Hartendorp, 1967: 465)

Aside from the TVT papers and the *Liwayway*, *Shinseiki*, *Davao Nichi Nichi* and *Bicol Herald*, provincial papers published at the time included the *Visayan Shimbun* and *Leyte Shimbun* and magazines like *Pillars* and *Filipina*. As to be expected, all these publications carried articles and photographs depicting everything that was good about Japan and the Japanese.

There were also the official journals such as the *Journal of the Philippines* which was first published on March 21, 1942, by the Japanese military administration, and the *City Gazette*. These were in English and Japanese and contained speeches and proclamations of the officers of the Imperial Japanese Forces, the Japanese Military Administration as well as those of the Philippine Executive Commission (Soriano, 1948: 146).

All the newspapers, magazines and journals contained Japanese propaganda in various forms. Apart from giving a positive image of the Japanese and publishing photographs to demonstrate Japanese might, they also criticized the United States. Articles lambasted the Americans for renegeing on their promises to the Filipinos, and criticized the American soldiers for alleged lack of courage. The publications likewise came out with statements of captured Filipino and American guerrillas urging other guerrillas to surrender and convincing them of the futility of their struggle. An example of one such article came out in the *Visayan Shimbun* on September 5, 1943, and was based on the statement of Hugh Straughn, an American guerrilla who was captured by the Japanese. It was entitled "Guerrilla Activities in P.I. Futile":

I organized a guerrilla band known as the Filipino American Irregular Troops which was nothing but a make believe organization and materially composed of bandits, outlaws and other dissatisfied elements without effective arms or weapons.

The "Marking Guerrilla" was either annihilated by the Japanese punitive expeditions or dissolved through voluntary desertions. The group became so

small since March 1943 that it had to be formally disbanded on May 1943. (*Leyte-Visayan Shimbun*, [1943, September 5])

### *Pamphlets and posters*

To supplement the propaganda disseminated through the various newspapers and magazines, the Japanese came out with pamphlets discussing diverse issues. These were written either by well-known Japanese propaganda men or Filipino officials and well-known writers.

The Bureau of Information and Public Security and the Department of Interior published a pamphlet justifying the rationing of commodities like sugar, cooking oil, laundry soap, matches, etc. as a measure to protect the poor. Its title was “Get the Most Benefit Out of Controlled Economy.” It had both English and Filipino versions.

There were also pamphlets trying to promote the use of the Filipino language in an effort to discourage the Filipinos from using the English language. This was produced by Kalibapi and was called “The Propagation of the Filipino Language.”

But most of the pamphlets emphasized the role of Japan in the resurgence of the Philippines. These pamphlets include: 1) “The Legacy of the Rising Sun to the New Philippines,” written by Jose P. Santos, cited Japanese contribution to the Philippine industries and the country’s struggles for emancipation; 2) “Aguinaldo’s Independence Army,” written by Ki Kimura, narrated the courage and patriotism of the Filipino revolutionary leaders, but highlighted the support given by Japan to Aguinaldo and his men’s struggle for freedom; 3) “One Nation, One Heart, One Republic,” written by President Jose P. Laurel, argued that the Filipinos must cooperate with the Japanese if the Philippines is to attain peace and progress; and 4) “Peace, Life and Freedom,” published by the Department of Interior, expounded on the benevolence of the Japanese and how the Philippines could become great with their support.

Other pamphlets attacked the United States. One was titled “America” and was purported to be an account of American history. However, the pamphlet claimed that it was a revelation of America’s true character and said that its entire history was nothing but “a hypocritical account of buccaneering.”

“To the Filipino Youth” was another pamphlet, written by Gen. Artemio Ricarte, a popular revolutionary figure during Aguinaldo’s time. He blamed the US for all the misfortunes that the Philippines had suffered.

The pamphlets, likewise, did not fail to chronicle events like the inauguration of the Philippine Republic and the visit of Premier Tojo to the Philippines.

The posters propagated the same ideas – the benevolence of Japan, the weakness of the US, and the good fortune of the Philippines and the Filipinos to be under the care of the Rising Sun.

In her analysis of posters distributed during the Japanese period, Rafaelita Soriano found that there were five objectives exemplified:

- (1) The inciting of hatred against Americans;
- (2) The awakening in the Filipinos of greater sense of nationalism, and pride in their native culture and traditions to arouse in the Filipinos a dislike for what they called the decadent western culture and civilization;
- (3) Emphasizing the contrast between the degenerate and soft living of the occidental peoples and the healthy mode of life of the Japanese;
- (4) Other posters glorified Japan’s military might; and
- (5) The propagation of the doctrine of “Asia for the Asiatics” and of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. (Soriano, 1948: 138)

Posters also played an important part in the Japanese propaganda campaign. These posters were distributed throughout the country and were most likely read by a large number of Filipinos.

## *Radio*

The Japanese banned the use of radio in the first few months of the war. Then in July 1942, Filipino radio owners were ordered to register their radios (Hartendorp, 1967: 469). In January 1943, the reconditioning of radio sets was ordered. Reconditioning meant that the radio sets could pick up only the Japanese-controlled radio stations. Under this order, the radio sets were to be brought to any one of the 13 “delivery stations” to have the sets reconditioned. All sets were then turned over to DENSEI-KYOKU (Office of Electrical Communications), then returned to the owners after reconditioning.

The January 7, 1943 issue of the *Tribune* published the order and the accompanying official statement:

The Army authorities in order to safeguard the Philippine public from the influence of fabricated enemy propaganda, had prohibited the reception of all broadcasts excepting those made by the Japanese army and those originating in Japan, also restricting the use of outdoor aerials. However, it is regrettable that clandestine reception of enemy propaganda continued together with the spreading of unfounded rumors... The Army authorities have been avoiding any measures such as the reconditioning of radio receivers with the hope that the situation would be solved through reliance on the dictates of the conscience of each individual. Yet illicit reception continued and rumors continued to be spread. Therefore, the army decided to adopt the measure. (Hartendorp, 1967: 469)

However, even the reconditioned radios could receive signals from Kweitung, Chunking, New Delhi, Sydney and Brisbane. The stations rebroadcast British and American news broadcasts (Hartendorp, 1967: 470).

While the equipment of the prewar radio stations were destroyed by some USAFFE officers so that the Japanese would not be able to use them, the latter still found ways of reconstructing a radio station. This station was called KZRH and was much weaker than the prewar stations. It had a power of 1-kilowatt and a range of only 200 kilometers. Relay stations were put up in other provinces like Cebu, Baguio, Davao and Legaspi (Hartendorp, 1967: 470).

Apart from KZRH, the Department of Information had a broadcasting section renamed as the Philippine Broadcasting Management Bureau. This operated the station which had the call letters PIAM (Philippine Islands AM), and was used to support the Military Administration in its propaganda campaign.

These two stations broadcast mostly musical numbers, much of which was, ironically, American jazz. The stations signed on at 7 o'clock in the morning, immediately followed by "Radio Taiso," a daily calisthenics program. During this particular program, the school children and the workers in offices and factories were required to go out and perform physical exercises (Hartendorp, 1967: 470).

News was broadcast three times a day in English. These were repeated in Japanese, Tagalog and Spanish (Soriano, 1948: 160). There were also daily lessons in Nippongo and a few talk shows where leading personages were invited. Later on, magazine programs were introduced where prominent society ladies discussed a variety of topics like gardening, cooking, fashion and beauty tips, even politics and government (Soriano, 1948: 160).

As a vital information source of the Filipinos, the radio was used to the utmost by the Japanese. However, people were more interested in getting signals from foreign stations rather than the Japanese-run KZRH and PIAM.

*Movies and Theater*

Together with other forms of media, the movies were also utilized by the Japanese as a medium for their propaganda. While they did not reach as many people as the radio and the newspapers did, they nevertheless helped in running the Japanese propaganda machinery.

Movies continued to be shown in commercial theaters. However, there was strict censorship. Only movies that projected positive things about Japan were allowed to be shown. An example of such a movie was entitled *New Snow*. This movie depicted Japanese community and family life, somehow suggesting that an equally good life could be enjoyed by the Filipinos under the administration of the Japanese (Soriano, 1948: 158).

American movies which enjoyed wide patronage among the Filipinos before the war were banned. However, one or two movies about the Americans were shown, but this was done to project a negative image of America and the Americans. There were films put together by the Japanese to suit their purpose. One such film was "Tear Down the Stars and Stripes" which was supposed to be "an account of activities in Bataan when the Americans used the Filipinos as human barricades" (Soriano, 1948: 158).

There were also a few Filipino movies shown during the war. But these were aimed at contributing to building up Japan and Japanese ideas. One such movie was "Tatlong Maria" which tried to inculcate values the Japanese considered positive.

Apart from these movies, "movie shorts" were inserted in-between the showings of full-length pictures. The "movie-shorts", as to be expected, were shown for their propaganda value (Soriano, 1948: 148).

Because of lack of interesting movies, the Filipinos turned to theater. Hence, the war period saw the flourishing of many vaudeville troupes. While these programs played in theaters served to entertain a number of people, they lacked polish and style and

consisted mainly of song-and-dance numbers and broadly indecent sketches, scandalizing many people (Hartendorp, 1967: 468).

The few plays were about the Spanish-American war and the Filipino-American war which emphasized the help extended by the Japanese to the Filipinos (Hartendorp, 1967: 468).

The above discussion points to one fact — that the Japanese had a massive propaganda machine, well-thought of and well-organized. The faint in heart and the weak in spirit would not even imagine countering it. But many Filipinos did, and to a great extent, succeeded.

## **The Philippine Guerilla Movement**

### *The beginning of the resistance movement*

The counterpropaganda movement during World War II can never be discussed independently of the resistance movement. The underground media, after all, were born out of the need of the guerrilla forces for support and cooperation of the people. They knew that they could not survive without these. And they knew that not only did they have to counteract Japanese propaganda, they also had to inform the people of the purpose and activities of the guerrilla movement. More importantly, they had to give the people accurate news on war developments, and warn them against collaboration with the Japanese.

With the fall of Bataan and Corregidor, thousands of USAFFE officers and men, both Filipinos and Americans, retreated from their commands. Thankful that they had escaped a life of torture, hunger and pestilence in the Capas and O'Donnell concentration camps, many Filipino ex-USAFFE soldiers returned to their homes. But the other Filipinos, as well as the Americans whose only other alternative was to become prisoners for an unknown length of time, chose to remain in the hills and continued fighting the Japanese forces (Lachica, 1971: 110). These former USAFFE men constituted the early guerrilla forces.

However, there were also other guerrilla forces which were organized even before the fall of Bataan. These were mostly the guerrilla bands in Northern and Central Luzon which “sprang up spontaneously from the Filipino-American divisions previously cut off from the main body of soldiers who retreated to Bataan” (Soriano, 1948: 332).

During the early stage of the existence of these guerrilla forces, the local officials tried to dismiss them. It was said that Jose P. Laurel, the president of the Philippine Republic under the Japanese, used the word guerrilla “to cajole those whom he could not persuade to accept office under him” (Quirino, 1958: 170).

The guerrillas soon made their presence felt. However, it must be made clear that there was no unified guerrilla movement in the country. There were hundreds of guerrilla units in various parts of the archipelago. The geographical conditions of the country made it difficult to unify the guerrilla movement in the various islands. Likewise, the units could not get in touch with the other units. The fact that the Japanese forces were ever on the alert for any communication between these forces did not make it easier for the guerrilla units.

Resistance in much of the Philippines was a haphazard affair. It expressed no single outlook and possessed no unified program. It represented a form of adjustment on the part of sections of a population to a situation not of their own devising, wherein they saw no possibility of cooperating with the enemy and took to active opposition as the only alternative. No systematic plan for carrying on this resistance, no social philosophy to clarify the meaning of this resistance. No program of reconstruction after the expulsion of the enemy. (Lear, 1961: 32)

Apart from lack of unity, one other serious problem faced by the guerrilla movement was lack of funds. Despite the support given by the civilian populace, the tight watch of the Japanese

prevented continuous help and communication between the guerrillas and the civilians, and among the guerrillas themselves. In some cases, the civilians withheld their support because of prior experience with bandits and looters who posed as guerrillas.

Nevertheless, the mere existence of the guerrilla movement helped a lot. Civilian awareness that there was a resistance movement against the Japanese buoyed up hopes and spirits. The resistance movement and its counterpropaganda provided the civilians a rallying point.

The continued existence of resistance conditioned the people to reject Japanese propaganda. The widespread distribution of guerrilla warfare to the most remote and small island kept the people almost completely unified and the eventual radio contact of the unified guerrilla movement with US army headquarters provided the actual information on the progress of the war which was essentially controverting Japanese propaganda. (Soriano, 1948: 367)

### *Counterpropaganda*

The fact that most of the broadcasting stations and the major newspapers in the country were in Manila made it easy for the Japanese to take complete control of the press. But as soon as the first guerrilla unit in the archipelago was set up, the anti-propaganda movement speedily emerged. Dozens of guerrilla organizations including the 11 major groups in Luzon (Steinberg, 1979: 23) engaged in counterpropaganda. After the guerrillas were recruited and organized, the units started their underground activities by breaking through the news blackout as enforced through the Japanese's total control of the communications system.

The various guerrilla units, using various forms of the mass media available to them, worked to counter the massive propaganda by the Japanese. The pamphlets and leaflets, the radio broadcasts,

and the guerrilla newspapers served to refute the Japanese and their stories that came out in the controlled media.

### *The guerrilla newspapers*

#### Profile

Underground newspapers have earned their rightful place in Philippine history for the role they played during World War II. However, the clandestine nature of these publications led to the scarcity of available documentation. Their importance rests mainly in bolstering the spirits of the population and the guerrillas by countering the news and information disseminated by the Japanese, and not in directly harassing Japanese forces.

Because these guerrilla newspapers were circulated in support of the underground movement, it is difficult to determine how many such publications existed during the war. Dean Armando J. Malay said there could have been around 30 publications, although he said that this number would account only for those published regularly (A. J. Malay, personal interview, February 24, 1988). Thus, out of the over 100 publications listed by Ricardo J. Jose in his paper on the guerrilla press, it is safe to assume that many stopped publishing after one or two issues. Others resurfaced later under new names. Some stopped publication for fear of being discovered by the Japanese authorities, while the rest could not be maintained for long due to lack of resources (R. T. Jose, personal interview, March 3, 1988).

Likewise worth noting is the fact that some guerrilla publications which were circulated in different places in the country, in different time periods, and by different people, bore the same names. Thus, there were several versions of *Liberator*, *Freedom*, *Victory News*, *Free Philippines*, *The Flash*, and *Red, White and Blue*.

Nearly half of the known publications were in the Visayas, specifically in Panay and Leyte. There could be several explanations

for this. One, the guerrilla movement in this area was better organized and more active than in the other areas of the country. Two, the Japanese had a weaker hold over the Visayas, since the heart of their operations was in Manila (P. Mojica, personal interview, March 28, 1989).

The most famous newspaper published in Panay was *Ang Tigbatas* (Agoncillo, 1965: 253). This was the work of the Free Panay Movement under Tomas Confesor. Other guerrilla newspapers published in Panay include *The Coordinator*, *Freedom*, *Harbinger*, *Poetry*, *Victory News*, *66<sup>th</sup> Infantry Chronicle*, *Unknown Soldiers*, *Multitimes*, and *Mt. Baloy Watchmen*.

Cebu also had its share of guerrilla newspapers, the most prominent of which was the *Morning Times*, which was edited by Pete Calomarde. It first came out in 1942 and lasted until the end of the war. Another guerrilla publication, *Kadaugan*, edited by Cipriano Barba, also came out in 1942, but lasted for less than a year. The *Visayan Shinbun* of Napoleon Dejoras also had the same fate (Roperos, 2005).

As mentioned earlier, the majority of the underground papers were put out by guerrilla units. This was not surprising since the papers got their names for being the mouthpiece of the underground forces. For instance, the *Liberator*, one of the more popular guerrilla publications at that time, was edited by Leon O. Ty for President Quezon's Own Guerrillas in Cavite and was set up primarily to boost the morale of the guerrillas and attract more people to join the resistance movement. Other publications put out by various guerrilla units were *Bolos and Bullets* by the Bohol Force, *Torch* by Free Cebu, *Weekly News Bulletin* by the 6<sup>th</sup> Military District in Panay, and *Voice of Free Samar* by the Free People of Samar, among others.

The Bicol resistance movement, through its guerrilla units, also produced a number of guerrilla papers. These included *The Voice of Free Isarog*, *The Voice of Freedom*, *War Digest*, *War News Bulletin*, and *The Commentator*. It was said that

civilians actually helped distribute copies of these papers (Gripaldo, 1983: 56).

The Sulu Area Command produced *Free Sulu News*, a four to six-page mimeographed publication that contained general and local news. It could not be determined whether it first came out in late 1944 or in early 1945. But like most of the guerrilla newspapers, it came out irregularly and was short-lived.

The papers published by American forces in the Philippines included *Press of Freedom*, *USAFIP Newsletter*, *Free Philippines*, and *Freedom*. There were two guerrilla papers published by the Hunters ROTC guerrillas from 1943 to 1945. These were *The Patriot* and *Thunderclap*.

The Hukbalahaps also came out with publications. One of these was *Ing Masala* (The Light) which was put out in October 1942. The other publication was *Aspirant*, a literary magazine edited by Brion Gutierrez. Both of these publications came out in Pampanga (Malay, 1955: 10). It is interesting to note that the Chinese, mostly through their associations, also came out with their own publications. Some of these were *The Fuse*, *The Chinese Guide*, *The Sentinel* and *Tai Han Huan* (Rodriguez, 1945: 26).

The clandestine nature of these publications made it difficult to ascertain which among them was the first guerrilla publication. During the liberation, many offered information as to which guerrilla newspaper could take credit for being the first to emerge. One declared that it must have been *New Era* as this came out on February 4, 1942, or within the first few weeks of Japanese occupation.

*New Era* was a one-page mimeographed paper which appeared almost daily during the first few months of its publication. Printed in an old building on Juan Luna Street and edited by Manuel Buenafe, the news sheet contained information taken from foreign broadcasts (Malay, 1955: 11).

This claim, however, was later contested by Flor Borja who said that there was another anti-Japanese paper which appeared

a month before *New Era* did. This was the *Lico-Chronicle* which first came out on January 3, 1942. Edited by Manuel Abad Gaerlan, a DMHM staff member at the outbreak of the war, the *Lico-Chronicle* came out with 48 issues in all, published daily. The paper prided itself for being “the only single copy newspaper in the world with the greatest readership following to the copy.” It resembled a regular tabloid with editorials, columns and maps, although it was typewritten throughout. Like *New Era*, the materials used by the paper were gleaned from foreign radio broadcasts (Netzorg, 1977: 45).

It is possible, however, that there was another guerrilla paper which antedated the *Lico-Chronicle*. The *Kalibo War Bulletin*, for instance, was said to have been circulated from 1941 to 1944. Established by the young men of Kalibo and Capiz to rally the people and keep them informed, it might have fared even better as it was said to print 1,000 to 5,000 copies per issue (Bautista, 1967: 6).

In the end, it might prove futile to identify the first guerrilla newspaper ever put out in the Philippines. The question of which was first would, anyway, be of lesser importance when measured against the paper’s and its staff’s ability to outsmart the Japanese and keep the paper alive despite the constraints, limited resources, and threats on their lives.

### Content Analysis of Three Guerrilla Papers

Despite the fact that many guerrilla newspapers failed to publish regularly, and some actually ceased publication after a couple of issues, there were also guerrilla newspapers that managed to come out consistently. These include *Leyte-Samar Free Philippines*, *The Coordinator*, and *Ang Tigbatas*. All three newspapers were published in the Visayas where resistance to the Japanese was strongest.

## *Leyte-Samar Free Philippines*

### Format

*Leyte-Samar Free Philippines* was published in Tacloban, Leyte. Its first issue came out on October 29, 1944 after MacArthur and Osmeña's landing in Leyte. The paper measured 8 ½" x 11" and consisted of two pages, each with four columns. It was originally a weekly newspaper, but was published twice a week, on Thursdays and Sundays starting on its eighth issue. Compared with other wartime papers, it was better off in the sense that it was printed rather than merely mimeographed or typewritten.

On its second issue, its editorial box stated that the paper was being "published by P.W.B, G.H.Q., O.W.I, Section." But no mention was made of the editorial staff. Only a few articles had bylines. There was no indication that the paper was sold.

The paper's last issue came out on March 18, 1945. It can only be surmised that by this time, it had outlived its usefulness.

Out of the 37 issues of *Leyte-Samar Free Philippines* since it first came out on October 29, 1944 up to the cutoff date, 20 issues were chosen at random. December 1944 and January 1945 had the most number of issues at five (5) for each month. November 1944 and February 1945 each had four issues, while October 1944 and March 1945 had one issue each for a total of 20 issues (see Table 1).

### Number of articles per issue

The number of articles in each issue of the paper varied. November 12, 1944 and January 4, 1945 issues had the least number of articles at nine (9) each. The November 12 issue could only accommodate nine articles as it printed a schedule which listed down the maximum prices of basic items and services for wholesalers, retailers and consumer. The list filled up half of the second page. The said issue also had a feature article entitled "Pacific War Review" 1942-1944 which was two columns in length.

Table 1. Distribution of newspaper samples according to month and year of publication

Month and Year	No.
October 1944	1
November 1944	4
December 1944	5
January 1945	5
February 1945	4
March 1945	1
TOTAL	20

The January 4, 1945 issue, on the other hand, had a 1945 calendar on the second page. Hence, only one page was devoted to articles.

Of the issues analyzed, the March 1, 1945 issue had the most number of articles at 30. These were expectedly short articles, mostly brief local news.

The average number of articles for the 20 issues analyzed was 17.

### Type of articles

Since the paper's primary function was to provide the people with information during the war, it is not surprising that 85 per cent of the articles were news items. Only about seven percent of the total number of articles were editorials. The first issue of the paper did not have an editorial, but a few of the subsequent issues carried two editorials, thus accounting for 23 editorials.

Feature articles which comprised four percent were generally war reviews and profiles of famous war personalities.

Table 2. Distribution of the number of articles per issue\*

<b>Date of Issue</b>	<b>No. of Articles</b>
October 29, 1944	11
November 5, 1944	14
November 12, 1944	9
November 19, 1944	15
November 20, 1944	17
December 7, 1944	18
December 10, 1944	15
December 17, 1944	17
December 21, 1944	18
December 28, 1944	15
January 4, 1945	9
January 7, 1945	17
January 18, 1945	20
January 21, 1945	19
January 28, 1945	14
February 5, 1945	25
February 8, 1945	23
February 11, 1945	18
February 25, 1945	22
March 1, 1945	30
TOTAL	346

\*X=17.3

Columns, on the other hand, accounted for three percent. The column, which was titled “Tokyo Says...,” quoted sources from Japan on issues concerning the war which it then refuted. The other articles were letters to the editor and advertisements/announcements (see Table 3).

Table 3. Distribution of sample by type of articles

Type of article	No.	%
News	294	85.0
Feature	14	4.0
Editorial	23	6.6
Column	11	3.2
Letter to the editor	2	0.6
Advertisements/announcements	2	0.6
TOTAL	346	100.0

### Subject/Topic of news articles

Out of the 294 news articles, nearly two-thirds (65%) were news stories about the war. This was to be expected since everybody during that time was interested in war developments. The Filipinos, for instance, wanted to know at that time the extent of the gains made by the Allied forces, specifically the US forces. They also wanted to find out how soon the Philippines would be liberated. Being an instrument for counterpropaganda, war news focused on the headway steadily gained by the US forces in the Philippines especially after the famous Leyte landing, and also the gains made by other Allied forces in other parts of the world.

During this period, some parts of Leyte and Samar had been liberated from the Japanese, hence a number of articles (8%)

were about the plans and activities of the local government which included the rebuilding of barrios and towns, and the organization of people for socio-civic activities. News on people and on the economy and finance accounted for five percent each, while foreign news, mostly on the other Allied countries, constituted four percent of the news articles on collaboration and cases of disloyalty. The most celebrated case was that of Bernardo Torres, ex-governor of Leyte, who was charged with collaboration with the Japanese. Other topics in the news are listed in Table 4.

### Personalities

Varied personalities figured prominently in the newspaper articles. Forty-five percent (45%) were on Filipino civilians, who were mostly heads of civic organizations, while the others were wives or family members of government officials. Some Filipino civilians who figured in the news were traders or businessmen who had been caught overpricing their merchandise. More than one-third or 34% of the articles which centered on personalities featured American army officials, specifically the general who led American troops in attacking the Japanese.

As expected, Gen. Douglas MacArthur figured prominently in 21% of the articles, while President Osmeña was the focus of 13% of the articles. Other personalities prominently mentioned were Filipino civilian officials (29%), mostly mayors and heads of various departments and committees. There were also a number of items on Axis army officials, notably Gen. Yamashita, Filipino Army officials, among others. The other personalities whose names appeared in the articles are listed in Table 5.

Table 4. Distribution of sample subject/topic of news articles\*

<b>Subject/Topic</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>
War news	191	65.0
Economic/Financial	15	5.1
People	15	5.1
Trade and Industry	3	1.0
Education	6	2.0
Health	3	1.0
Arts and culture	2	0.7
Aid/Rehabilitation	22	7.5
Government and politics	7	2.4
Agriculture and Food	2	0.7
Foreign News	12	4.1
Mass media	3	1.0
Peace and security	2	0.7
Community/Civic organizations	2	0.7
Celebrations/Activities	2	0.7
Public service/announcement	3	1.0
Collaboration/Disloyalty cases	7	2.4
Labor	1	0.3
Religion	2	0.7

\*n=294

Table 5. Distribution of sample by prominent personalities\*

<b>Personality</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>
Gen. McArthur	22	20.8
Pres. Osmeña	41	13.2
Gen. Romulo	5	4.7
Pres. Roosevelt	5	4.7
American army officials	36	34.0
Filipino guerrilla/army officials	9	8.5
Allied army officials	2	1.9
Axis army officials	16	15.1
Filipino civilian officials	31	29.2
American civilian officials	4	3.8
Civilian foreigners	9	8.5
Religious officials	4	3.8
"Collaborators"	6	5.7
Filipino soldiers	2	1.9
American civilians	5	4.7
Japanese civilian officials	2	1.9
Filipino civilians	48	45.3
Foreign civilian official	1	0.9

\*n=106

## *The Coordinator*

### Format

*The Coordinator* was the official publication of the Sixth Military Division in Panay. This paper contained news releases transmitted to the various guerrilla units in Panay thru KGEX in San Francisco which in turn got its news stories from foreign newspapers. The news releases were mostly about the land, naval and aerial operations of the Allied Forces in the Philippines.

The April 24, 1944 edition of *The Coordinator* stated that it was the first issue. However, in February 1944, there were typewritten news releases on Grade II pad paper which also contained reports on war developments in different parts of the world. The February 17 issue was headlined “Washington News Coordinator” while earlier ones were headlined “United Press News.”

The paper was published daily. It had two pages and was typewritten in various types of paper such as newsprint, Kraft paper, and intermediate school paper in various sizes.

The paper had no distinct sections. In fact, the articles themselves had no titles. They were classified according to the country or area where the event took place.

Issues of the paper came out until the early part of 1945. Just like the other guerrilla publications, it folded up upon the liberation of the country from the Japanese.

### Contents

Twenty issues were selected from the available issues of *The Coordinator* through simple random sampling. The issues content analyzed were from the months of August 1944 to January 1945. The April 29, 1944 maiden issue was included in the sample. It was, however, the only one available from the April issues. As the distribution in Table 6 shows, the months of May, June and July

1944 were not represented. This was because not a single issue of the publication for the said months could be traced. From 1945, on the other hand, only one issue was available, which was included in the study.

Table 6. Distribution of sample by month and date of publication

Date of Publication	No
April 1944	1
August 1944	3
September 1944	6
October 1944	2
November 1944	3
December 1944	4
January 1945	7
TOTAL	20

As each publication came in a single sheet of paper, it was to be expected that there would be few articles. In its first issue for instance, there was only one article. The most number of articles for one issue was six. The average number of articles for twenty issues content analyzed is 4.3 (see Table 7).

As mentioned earlier, *The Coordinator* contained news releases mostly from KGEX in the United States. As such, it did not have the usual sections expected from a regular newspaper. It carried only news items and none of the other types of articles.

Even the articles themselves did not have titles but merely indicated the place where the event transpired or where the Allied troops were based. In some cases where naval operations were reported and no specific countries could be mentioned, only the regions or areas were cited, e.g., East Asia, Southeast Pacific, Europe, etc.

Table 7. Distribution of sample by number of articles per issue\*

Date of Issue	No. of Articles
April 24, 1944	1
August 24, 1944	6
August 28, 1944	4
August 29, 1944	5
September 7, 1944	4
September 15, 1944	5
September 16, 1944	5
September 17, 1944	4
September 19, 1944	4
September 27, 1944	4
October 21, 1944	4
October 24, 1944	6
November 27, 1944	4
November 29, 1944	3
November 30, 1944	4
December 1, 1944	4
December 2, 1944	5
December 4, 1944	5
December 8, 1944	5
January 10, 1945	4
TOTAL	86

\*x=4.3

The *Coordinator* articles reported only those events concerning the ongoing world war. Troop movements, attacks, and bombings, and specially victories scored by the Allied Forces were the usual subjects. Neither was there much mention of personalities. Names of personalities, especially those from the military like Gen. Douglas MacArthur, Admiral Chester Nimitz, etc. saw print not as the main subjects of the news stories but only in their capacities as high-ranking military officials directing Allied troops in their various operations.

### *Ang Tigbatas*

#### Format

*Ang Tigbatas* was published by Free Panay. This paper was founded in December 1942 under the editorship of Abe S. Gonzales. The paper came out every Wednesday and Friday from its first issue until 1945.

Regular issues of the paper were in Hiligaynon while the special editions, which included supplements and extras, and all the 1945 issues, were in English. The regular issues were printed on newsprint while many of the special editions were printed on school pad paper, sometimes on intermediate pad paper, at other times on Grade I or Grade II paper. The special issues came in various sizes, one-fourth or one-half of the regular size of the paper. These issues also had fewer pages – only two per issue.

During its entire life-span, *Ang Tigbatas* went through a number of changes in its appearance and contents. The 1943 issues, for instance, were generally bigger, around 8 ½” x 14”. The 1943 issues had more pages, eight (8), compared with the 1944 issues which had only four (4) pages.

The 1943 and 1944 issues did not have distinct sections for local and foreign news. It was only in October 1944, after the landing of General MacArthur and his staff, when the paper had a

regular editorial section. Prior to that, the paper almost regularly had articles in the last page which were usually titled “What do all these mean?,” “As we see it,” or “Reflections”.

Starting with the October 21, 1944 issue, the paper published the names of the editor-in-chief and the news editor, Abe S. Gonzales and Jose J. Guevarra, respectively.

The 1945 issues of *Ang Tigbatas* reflected the renewed courage of the Filipinos and the relatively freer conditions under which they were operating. These issues were not only bigger in size (around 14” x 9”), but used better quality paper. They had advertisements and legal notices. At this time, each copy was sold at 15 centavos which would later be increased to 20 centavos.

The staff box of *Ang Tigbatas* in 1945 already had the complete lineup of the staffers. The paper, according to information contained in the staff box, was published by the Board of Information. The Board of Directors was composed of Patricio V. Confesor as Chairman, Mariano V. Benedicto as Vice-Chairman, and Abe S. Gonzales as General Secretary.

The researcher chose to content analyze the issues of *Ang Tigbatas* from June 1944 to February 1945. Twenty issues were randomly selected from the said period with the resulting distribution depicted in Table 8. The scope of the content analysis was primarily based on the availability of issues. Although there were 1943 issues of *Ang Tigbatas* in the CPU collection, these were quite a few and inadequate for the researcher’s purposes.

### *The men behind the guerrilla papers*

During the war, being caught with an anti-Japanese publication meant physical torture to the bearer or even death. The Kempetais were especially concerned with such publications because these underground leaflets, tabloids, pamphlets, posters, and handouts exposed Japanese lies about their allegedly superior military strength and victorious battles. These publications also ridiculed Japanese officials. Furthermore, the guerrilla papers exposed “mass murders,

Table 8. Distribution of sample by month and year of publication

<b>Date of Publication</b>	<b>No. of issues</b>
June 1944	2
July 1944	3
August 1944	3
September 1944	3
October 1944	3
November 1944	2
December 1944	1
January 1945	2
February 1945	1
TOTAL	20

brutalities and hellish torture committed by the Japanese against Filipino guerrillas and/or their relatives” (Bautista, 1967: 6).

Apart from the threats of torture and death, the men behind the guerrilla newspapers faced another problem – that of the lack of various materials indispensable for publication. There was a dearth of paper, printing ink, typewriters, mimeograph machines and other printing equipment. It was for this reason that several publications used all kinds of scrap paper, from newsprint to Kraft paper to grade-school pad paper. It was also because of this that some of the guerrilla papers were not printed but mimeographed or simply typewritten, and sometimes even written in longhand.

But despite discouraging odds, the anti-Japanese movement was never wanting of avid contributors. Many of these were former editors and writers from the staffs of leading papers which had to close down at the outbreak of the war. Knowing that they could be of much help writing underground as others were fighting in

the battlefields, they chose to engage in keeping the people informed through the guerrilla papers. Among these were Leon O. Ty, Filemon Tutay, Esmeraldo Izon and other writers from the *Philippines Free Press*, all of whom helped in publishing the *Liberator* which was launched in July 1944. Their writing experiences and their courage must have worked to their advantage as the *Liberator* was one of the papers which had managed to elude the Japanese and thus survived the war until the liberation (Malay, 1955: 11).

Pedro de la Llana and Leopoldo Yabes, on the other hand, wrote for the *Flash*, one of the most widely circulated papers as it reached Mindanao through *batels* that plied the major islands of the archipelago. These same people, together with Jose Calip, put out *Thunderclap* as the organ of the Counter-Intelligence Propaganda Corps (Bautista, 1967: 7).

Journalists of community papers before the war also became actively involved in underground journalism. One such man was Pedro Calomarde who used to be a staff member of the *Cebu Advertiser*. Calomarde first came out with the guerrilla paper *Morning Times* in Cebu in 1943. *Morning Times* was a weekly four-page news sheet which had an average circulation of 500 copies per issue. This paper later became a daily and continued publishing until the late 60s (Agustin, 1972: 27).

However, there were some without any journalistic background who found themselves writing actively for the guerrilla papers. These were officers and members of the various guerrilla units, who, out of the desire to bolster the morale of the guerrillas and give the people a true picture of the war, ventured into writing and thereby discovered an aptitude for the job.

While journalistic background proved to be an edge in the counterpropaganda movement, strength of character and courageous determination proved to be as important, if not more important. In many cases, as practiced in most publications, there was no need to write original news stories, for radio broadcasts

from foreign stations based in the United States or Australia were merely reported verbatim or summarized.

In other papers, grammatical lapses were common and typographical errors predominated. But this was to be expected considering the conditions under which these papers saw print. These were put out hurriedly, using the poorest of facilities and equipment. Furthermore, readers of those papers could not care less about grammar and journalistic style which, admittedly, was wanting. The more immediate need of the movement was for the papers to let the people know what was happening in the warfront.

After the war, many of these men continued serving in the military. Others returned to their former work and reopened their respective offices. Still others went back to journalism. Not many knew who these people were, as more often than not, the stories in the guerrilla papers had no bylines, while some used pen names to hide their identities.

Those men whose papers survived the war were luckier, for they lived to tell their story. But for the many others whose papers were unfortunately discovered by the Japanese, and who were executed, their sacrifices were hardly known for they had carried their names to the grave. They will be remembered as the unsung heroes of underground journalism during World War II.

## **Radio**

Although the USAFFE destroyed all radio broadcasting equipment prior to their leaving Manila, (Pañares, 1986: n.p.) the Japanese subsequently set up their own, and used it to their advantage. They had the foresight to appreciate the potential use of radio not only in the communication system but as a powerful propaganda arm.

As mentioned earlier, on July 25, 1942, the Japanese Military Administration ordered the registration of all radio receiving sets. It also prohibited the people from listening to foreign broadcasts other than those of Japan, and to any local broadcasts other than those of KZRH, a prewar station whose studios were

housed in the Heacock building. Apart from KZRH, there were five other commercial radio stations: KZRM, KZRF, KZIB, KZEG and KZRC. There was also one government station: KZND, which operated to keep the public posted on war developments and prepare the Filipinos for war (Pañares, 1986). The same call letters were initially used by the Japanese for their radio station.

Not long after the issuance of the order, all radio sets were ordered submitted to the government where they underwent reconditioning. This reconditioning process ensured that the radio sets would only receive broadcasts from KZRG, this time known as PIAM.

There were, however, a few Filipinos who managed to hide their radio sets and thus evaded the required reconditioning. The unreconditioned radio sets proved useful in gathering broadcast news for the counterpropaganda movement.

Filipinos with unreconditioned radio sets listened to overseas broadcasts, specifically those from Australia and San Francisco. These radio stations gave them a true picture in so far as the war was concerned — troops movements and gains of the Allied forces. Because of these broadcasts, William Winters of KGEI in San Francisco and Sydney Rogers of KGEX became household names. Furthermore, these broadcasts became the wellspring in the writing of articles for yet another counterpropaganda arm during the war — the guerrilla newspapers.

While the guerrillas were not able to establish a radio station of their own that could relay to the people the war developments and the gains made by the Allied forces, there were a few who were able to infiltrate the Japanese-run radio stations. One such personality was Yay Panlilio. She was involved in radio and newspaper work years before the war. Owing to her experience, she was drafted as a radio announcer by the Japanese. And she used this position to help the resistance movement. She broadcast as much materials that would be helpful to the ex-USAFFEs and other guerrillas, such as defense plans and troop movements.

## **Leaflets/Pamphlets**

Apart from the radio and the guerilla papers, pamphlets and leaflets were also used to counter the powerful Japanese propaganda machinery. “The Myth of Tokyo” was said to be among the first of these pamphlets. It was a handsomely printed pocket-size pamphlet with a cover in colors. This was published by Roman de Santos and his companions (Garcia, 1972: 74).

Although Roman de Santos and company were caught by the Japanese authorities and subsequently executed, other counterpropaganda units were not deterred. Raul S. Manglapus, Manuel Fruto, Eliseo R. Lizada and Conrado Agustin were among those who printed and distributed anti-Japanese leaflets in the city and surrounding areas. This group was able to put out three issues of these leaflets within three months — the first one on April 28, the second on May 16, and the third on June 15, 1942 (Agustin, 1972: 82).

These anti-Japanese leaflets had two pages. The first page had a typewritten article, actually an open letter addressed to “countrymen”. One open letter narrated the history of the Philippines starting from Spain’s conquest, to the coming of the Americans until the invasion by Japan. The Spaniard was depicted as a master who conquered and enslaved the Filipino, but nevertheless left him with two important things: “the fear of one God, and the burning desire to be free as a people.” The American was considered a friend. “He conquered the islands, but all he conquered in the people was their hearts.” He was a Christian democrat who nurtured the seeds of freedom planted by the Spaniard, until it was time to set the Filipino free. However, the latter said that the coming of the “yellow invaders” prevented this. The Japanese was described as “an irreligious fanatic, to kill, with the biologically impossible doctrine that his emperor is descended from the sun, and his emperor wills that he should so destroy.”

The second pamphlet was another open letter supposedly written by a soldier who fought in Bataan and Corregidor. This letter, which was in Tagalog, tried to build up the morale of other guerrillas by saying that there was actually victory in defeat because while Bataan and Corregidor fell, the whole world witnessed and admired the courage shown by the Filipinos. It also reminded the Filipinos not to lose hope and to continue the struggle because America would fight for the Filipinos and would win the war,

The third leaflet which came out after the fall of Corregidor assured its readers that “Corregidor was but a pawn sacrificed in the great chess game that is this world conflict.” It urged the readers to be strong and patient and to wait for the coming of America.

The back page always carried political cartoons. All three leaflets carried this note at the bottom of the first page: “Filipinos Fight for Freedom! Read and Pass on to Free Filipinos — Never to Fifth Columnists”. Fifth columnists referred to Filipinos utilized by the Japanese to infiltrate resistance ranks.

Apart from these leaflets, there were many others which served to continue the flow of counterpropaganda. Some of the titles were: “To Puppet Laurel and His Quislings,” “How the Japs Tried to Break the Filipino Spirit,” and “A Breeding Place for Rats (AFPAC APO, 1945).

The members of the counterpropaganda units themselves distributed the leaflets by slipping them underneath doors, or casting them into backyards and other places where these could be readily picked up and read.

Because of the manner by which these leaflets were distributed, they were also known as “slip paper news.” Most of these did not have the date nor the place of publication. Some of these really carried the name “Slip News” and had articles, some titles of which are “Japanese Friendship for Hijos,” “A Fair Question,” “Invitation to Fools,” and “Accomplish your Mission.”

In the Visayas, particularly in Leyte where there was a strong counterpropaganda unit, a lot of leaflets came out. The most popular were the letters of Governor Tomas Confesor, the

governor of Free Panay, to Dr. Fermin Caram, the governor under the Japanese-recognized Philippine Republic. These were in response to the letters of Dr. Caram asking Governor Confesor to resign and cooperate with the government. It is said that these letters published in leaflets form moved so many Filipinos and contributed to whatever success the resistance movement earned (Malay, 1955: 10). This same letter would later be reprinted in one guerrilla newspaper, *Ang Tigbatas*.

As to be expected, the leaflets attacked the Japanese for destroying Filipino homes, looting the natural and artificial treasures of the land, and killing of people. At the same time, these pamphlets kept many Filipinos' hopes alive, that the Americans would soon come and rescue the Filipinos, and that the war would soon be won (Agustin, 1973: 82).

Apart from the pamphlets and leaflets put out by Filipino guerrillas, the staff of General MacArthur likewise issued leaflets as part of the United States psychological warfare. According to Herbert Friedman (2005), Carl Berger of the American University Special Operations Research Office was quoted as saying that the US military distributed nearly 28,500,000 leaflets throughout the islands.

The American military was also said to have used the so-called "black propaganda". One such black operation was the issuance of guerrilla postage stamps for the use of guerrillas in the Philippines. These were said to have been used by the 10<sup>th</sup> Military District Guerrilla Forces on Mindanao in November 1943 (Friedman, 2005).

## **The Role of the Counterpropaganda in World War II**

Ellul (1965) pointed out that propaganda at its best may not only change existing opinions but may lead to the formation or determination of attitudes. This the Japanese knew. Although they were aware that they could coerce the Filipinos to follow the strict and unreasonable rules implemented by the military, they also knew

that they had to do something more to make the people cooperate and help Japan in attaining its one dream – establishing an Asiatic empire under the guise of what they called the “Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere.” They knew they had to effect a transformation of Filipino values and attitudes.

The Japanese also knew that propaganda could only be successful if they had total control of the media. And this was precisely what they did. They made sure that the Filipinos were bombarded with propaganda over the radio, in print, even in the big screen.

With this highly efficient propaganda machinery churning out half-truths and exaggerations and with the *Kempetai* (military police) making sure that this propaganda campaign would be carried out uncontested, the Filipinos who were planning on a counterpropaganda move had a tough time.

It could be rightly said that there were strong reasons to give up the fight and cooperate with the enemy. One, the guerrillas who spearheaded the counterpropaganda did not stand a chance against the Japanese Army with the latter’s superiority in number, training and firepower. Two, a number of Filipinos were lured by the Japanese policy of benevolence. The Japanese gave out food, clothing, soap and other commodities to appease the people. They also presented a lot of attractive shows and provided venues for meetings between Filipinos and Japanese, thus making the former forget about the conflicts of war. Three, many people, especially those from the lowlands, were disappointed with the guerrillas. This was due to the abuses of some and the infighting among the various guerrilla units (Lear, 1961: 201).

These factors somehow lowered the morale of many guerrillas and even their civilian supporters. It was under these circumstances where the guerrilla press thrived and performed an important role.

The information that the guerrilla movement disseminated during the war served one major purpose: to counter Japanese propaganda and expose attempts of the Japanese to influence the

fledgling guerrilla forces and the civilians. Counterpropaganda took the form of speeches, radio broadcasts, leaflets and newspapers. Speeches were delivered by “good orators, budding orators, or just any public official” to remind both the soldiers and the civilians of their common goal – to fight the enemy until victory is attained. These speeches likewise warned the people to be wary of the tall tales and propaganda stories woven by the Japanese.

The leaflets, on the other hand, consisted of “typewritten and mimeographed flyers of pro-Allied interpretations of the war, condemnations of traitorous collaborators, and appeals for faith in an American return (Zaragoza, 1946: 99).

Radio broadcasts, while mostly dependent on newspapers for news, also produced men and women who dared to comment on Japanese activities.

But it could still be said that the guerrilla papers were the primary instruments for counterpropaganda. Consisting of more than 100 different publications, majority of these newspapers were official organs of the various guerrilla units in the country. The others, however, were spontaneous ventures, which did not go beyond publishing one or two issues.

Although mostly military in origin, these guerrilla papers were meant not only for the soldiers carrying on valiant struggle but for the civilian population as well. The publishers saw to it that the copies of the papers would reach the most number of people despite the perils involved. Circulation of issues to the guerrillas in their mountain camps was easy but the same could not be said about distributing the papers in the lowlands and town centers where the civilians converged. It was, thus, to the credit of certain brave people who took risks so that these papers would reach the civilians who had to be informed of actual developments.

The couriers of the papers employed diverse means to distribute them. Some had contact persons to whom they gave the paper. Others went to public places such as parks and markets and surreptitiously handed out copies to the people there. Another way was to throw copies into the yards of houses, and there were

others who slipped these papers under doors – which is why some guerrilla papers were described as “slip papers.”

But was their objective worthy enough for them to suffer the tortures which in many cases led to the death of those caught distributing the papers and thereafter executed by the dreaded *Kempetai*? More importantly, was their objective attained?

More than anything else, the counterpropaganda was meant to keep the hopes of the people alive – the hopes that the war would soon end, that the Allied forces would emerge victorious, and that Philippines would be rescued from the Japanese by the Americans, then generally perceived as certain to return in the role of liberators.

The reports of Allied successes, no matter if these were in far Europe or in any other obscure place, were said to have been enthusiastically received by the readers. Statements issued by Allied officials fired up the spirit of soldiers and civilians alike, regardless of veracity.

Faced with the well-polished propaganda of the Japanese, the most that could be done was to play up every favorable event. Thus, “when the carbines, chocolate bars and knickknacks arrived, the mountain morale reached a dizzying height”. And by then, the counterpropaganda was working full blast. The writers and broadcasters saw to it that their chronicles of crucial events were projected as headlines of the underground media. For every piece of Japanese propaganda, the guerrilla papers answered back. The stories of tortures and deaths which saw print only in the guerrilla papers, moved the Filipinos no end and strengthened them in their resolve to keep up the fight.

To say that these underground publications provided their reader with vital information would be superfluous at this point. As has been earlier mentioned, with the mass media completely controlled by the Japanese, the Filipinos sought ways to get reliable information. They either read the establishment papers and surmised the opposite of what was reported, or got hold of guerrilla newspapers to be able to piece together a more accurate picture of the prevailing situation.

These various forms of counterpropaganda aimed at integrating and unifying all soldiers and civilians alike who were looking forward to the eventual victory of the Allied forces, specially the United States. For both the soldiers and the civilians, these underground media served to constantly remind them to keep on fighting and never to lose sight of the goal – liberation from Japanese oppression.

## **Conclusion**

Immediately after the assassination of Benigno Aquino Jr. on August 21, 1983, there blossomed an alternative press which was regarded by many as a positive development in Philippine journalism. This so-called alternative press sought to provide as its name suggests, an alternative to the reading public for the credible news which the establishment media failed to give since the imposition of Martial Law in 1972. This press tried to give its readers more reliable and truthful news about Philippine government and politics. The socio-political turmoil brought about by the assassination, and the failure of the controlled media in reporting the actual events and developments, aided in the people's acceptance of the alternative press.

*Ang Bayan*, the official publication of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), has been coming out regularly since 1969. This publication has been providing the standpoint of the CPP on current issues since during the time of President Ferdinand Marcos until the present. In the past few years, it has become more readily accessible to the public as it is available on-line. It is also being translated in various Philippine languages, including Bisaya, Hiligaynon, Ilocano, and Waray. The Philippine revolution Web Central lists other revolutionary publications, although lesser known than *Ang Bayan*. These include Liberation, the official publication of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines, *Kalayaan*, the official newspaper of the Kabataang Makabayan, and what are dubbed as “revolutionary newspapers” of various



Marcelo H. del Pilar edited *La Solidaridad*.

groups of people in the Philippines (Philippine Revolution Web Central, 2006). These papers have served the purpose of the CPP well and have kept the underground press alive.

The so-called alternative press and “Xerox journalism” of the 1980s, the “mosquito press” of the late 70s, were not exactly new forms in Philippine journalism. They could also very well have been the same form which appeared before the turn of the century – the *La Solidaridad* of Marcelo H. del Pilar’s time and Emilio Jacinto’s *Kalayaan*. Both papers could be considered as alternatives to the then newspaper of the friars, *La Política de España en Filipinas* whose objective was to oppose any program

that would liberalize Philippine society and government at that time (LeRoy in Blair & Robertson, 1973: 164).

Under the Americans who were supposed to have been fountainheads of press freedom, there were also newspapers which could qualify as alternative newspapers. Among them were *El Nuevo Dia* which was edited by Sergio Osmeña, Rafael Palma and Jaime C. de Veyra and *El Renacimiento* edited by Teodoro M. Kalaw. These papers had to operate under strict censorship and continued persecution by the Americans. *El Renacimiento* was even sued for libel by Dean Worcester, then Secretary of Interior for an editorial entitled “Birds of Prey” (Valenzuela, 1933: 29).

Compared with these periods of Philippine history, the Japanese reign in the country could well hold its own if not surpass past records of strict control and even tyranny. Under these circumstances, most Filipinos turned to the mass media for information — the Japanese-controlled media and the underground media, churning out propaganda and counterpropaganda.

Ball-Rokeach and de Fleur’s Dependency Theory posits that the degree of dependency of the audiences on the mass media is influenced by the degree of structural stability of the society, as well as the number and centrality of information functions of the media system. The need for information from the mass media increases when the society is unstable, or when there exists social change and conflicts. Likewise, the audience’s dependence on the mass media is influenced by their perceived importance of what is being covered in the media (Littlejohn, 1989: 278).

Quite obviously, the above-mentioned factors were present during World War II. There was no question on the centrality of information. But which group captured the audience’s attention – the Japanese propaganda or the guerrilla counterpropaganda? What the counterpropaganda lacked in polish and organization, it made up for in passion and fervor. It was a case of the counterpropaganda appealing to the needs of the audience in the fight against oppression and its yearning for freedom.

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