

Paper No. 12

Breaking Bread: Philippine Mass Media and the Peace Process

By: Mary Grace V. Agoncillo
Philippines

Introduction

A few days ago, I was invited to speak in a Communication and Advocacy Planning Workshop for Children in Armed Conflicts. While listening to speakers ahead of me, I realized that in spite of the long list of peace initiatives embarked upon by both government and non-government institutions, the achievement of lasting peace is as elusive as finding fireflies in Metro Manila's concrete jungle.

Discussions on the role of Philippine media in promoting a culture of peace is not new. A number of roundtable discussions and workshops involving media practitioners as well as the academe have been conducted by government, non-government organizations and academic and media institutions in the past. The creation of an Alliance of Peace Communicators in 1994 was one concrete indicator of Philippine media's interests in promoting peace. Yet, on the tenth year of the Decade of Peace, we ask ourselves, has media really contributed to the promotion of a culture of peace or has it unwittingly promoted a culture of violence instead?

Understanding Peace

What is Peace?

Webster dictionary defines Peace as "an agreement to end war; freedom from public disturbances; harmony; concord; law and order; calm; quiet; serenity; undisturbed state of mind."

An article written by Mr. Patricio Diaz of the Mindanao Cross defines

"Peace as a condition of the mind. In such condition, the mind is free – free from fear, anxieties, worries and other forms of disturbances; therefore, free to take pleasure in the good, plan for the good and lead to the good. An environment free from fear, anxieties, worries and other forms of disturbances will set peace in the mind of the individual. Then, the individual is in the best condition to do good for himself and others around him. Peace is also a condition of the community, the region or the country. The presence or absence of peace in a place depends on the extent of peace, as a condition of the mind, prevailing in the people of the place. No place can create peace by itself; only the people can, according to the condition of their minds."

Framework for the Philippine Peace Process

Historically, the Philippines has seen much war and bloodshed. As a result of internal armed conflicts, thousands have been wounded, tortured, maimed in mind, body and spirit, even killed. The bloodless revolution in EDSA in 1986 brought it new beginnings and fresh hopes that non-violent means to conflict resolutions are indeed possible.

Executive Order 125, entitled “Defining the Approach and Administrative Structure for the Government’s Comprehensive Peace Efforts” and signed September 15, 1993 concretized this vision and provided the general framework for the government’s peace efforts. The first and fourth whereas clauses of the executive order sets the philosophy of the Philippine Peace Process:

- A primary objective of the government is the attainment of a just, comprehensive and lasting peace under the rule of law and in accordance with constitutional processes, which is the basic foundation for economic development and national prosperity.
- A comprehensive peace process demands a wholistic approach that will require the cooperative efforts of all sectors of society.

Principles in Building a culture of peace

The working paper presented during the Second International Forum on the Culture of Peace held in November 1995 in Manila, Philippines stated that “a culture of peace is based on values, attitudes, behaviors and ways of life that reinforce non-violence and respect for the fundamental rights and freedoms of every person. It hinges upon the celebration and acceptance of people’s right to be different and their right to a peaceful, secure existence within their communities.” Furthermore, the working paper underscores the following principles:

- The establishment of a culture of peace is marked by the sharing and free flow of information.
- A culture of peace cannot be imposed from outside. It is a long-term process that grows out of the beliefs and actions of the people themselves.
- The full participation and empowerment of women is essential to the development of a culture of peace.

Executive order no. 125 likewise outlines the underlying principles in the comprehensive peace process, as follows:

- A comprehensive peace process should be community based, reflecting the sentiments, values and principles important to all Filipinos. Thus, it shall be defined not by government alone, nor by the different contending groups only, but by all Filipinos as one community.
- A comprehensive peace process aims to forge a new social compact for a just, equitable, humane and pluralistic society. It seeks to establish a genuinely pluralistic political society where all individuals and groups are

free to engage in peaceful competition for predominance of their political programs without fear, through the exercise of rights and liberties guaranteed by the Constitution, and where they may compete for political power through an electoral system that is free, fair and honest.

- A comprehensive peace process seeks a principled and peaceful resolution of the internal armed conflicts, with neither blame nor surrender, but with dignity for all concerned.

The Six Paths to Peace

To achieve the vision of a just, comprehensive and lasting peace, the Philippine peace process pursues the Six Paths to Peace, as follows:

- Pursuit of social, economic and political reforms
- Consensus-building and empowerment for peace
- Peaceful, negotiated settlement with the different rebel groups
- Programs for reconciliation, reintegration into mainstream society and rehabilitation
- Addressing concerns arising from the continuing armed hostilities
- Building and nurturing a climate conducive to peace

The Philippine Mass Media: Warrior or Peace Advocate?

Role of Media in Promoting a Culture of Peace

Obviously, media plays an important role in promoting a culture of peace. Because of its pervasive presence, extensive reach and vast appeal to different types of audience, Media exerts a considerable influence on the way people look at things. It creates a climate of public opinion favorable or unfavorable to both the resolution of conflicts and culture of peace.

In discussing the role of media in promoting a culture of peace, Patricio Diaz said that “media, in all their various forms, are a means of social dialogue. Through the newspapers, the radio and television, the different sectors and members of society can communicate to each other their respective problems and concerns. Media has the rare privilege and power to initiate or moderate social dialogues. ”

Diaz likewise said that media plays different roles when the country is in the state of peace and when it is in a state of war. In a state of peace, media can help by preserving

that peace and enhancing the benefits derived from it; by reporting what is good. Though media reports crimes, “it should not make it appear that crimes and misdeeds are the most important happenings but rather crimes happen to remind people about the imperfections of society.” On the other hand, if the country is in a state of crisis or emergency, Diaz said that “there is a need for media to help reconcile the conflicting parties and when possible, to balance the negative with the positive. The people must know what is happening so that they can take necessary precautions or do something to help. But media should not sensationalize to create fear and panic but just to report the facts.” In other words, media should not “fan” the issues to avoid it from becoming a blazing fire.

Melinda Quintos de Jesus agrees that media can exert its influence in the creation of a culture of peace but it can only do so much. In a sense, developing a culture of peace must be a triumvirate partnership among the source of news (usually government), the channel of communication (the media) and the receiver (the audience – the Filipino people).

Perceptions or realities: What research studies say of media coverage of peace

Based on the exploratory study conducted for this seminar-workshop, the following can be gleaned:

1. Generally, media practitioners and peace advocates disagree (28 out of 42) with the statement that “news is basically negative in nature”. However, quite a number (15 out of 42) agreed with the statement.
2. Most of the respondents agree (32 out of 42) that mass media in the Philippines give prominence to events such as the conflict between nations, wars, inter-ethnic strifes and misunderstanding.
3. A lot of respondents (29 out of 42) disagree with the statement that reporting about religion is often imbalanced and subjective.
4. Religious and societal groups and NGOs in the Philippines have performed well in promoting peace, understanding and tolerance as perceived by many (34 out of 42).
5. Many agree that religious and societal groups have established good relations with the mass media.
6. All respondents agree that all parties have to work much more closely to promote a culture of peace.

Studies conducted by the Asian Institute of Journalism and Communication (AIJC) yielded the following results:

1. Respondents expressed the view that, generally speaking, media have the tendency to opt for sensational stories and conflict reportage.
2. Perception is that media gave more importance to the personalities involved than on the peace process itself.

3. Overall coverage of the peace process gave the least space to NGOs involvement and Muslim secessionist issue.
4. Biggest media space is given to leftist elements.

A content analysis of peace coverage was done by the Center for Media Freedom and Responsibility for six months in 1994. Eleven newspapers were examined focusing on the following themes: peace talks, peace and order and government reforms. Some of the findings are as follows:

1. Government is still the major source of news.
2. In most of the six paths to peace, government is the initiator of the activity
3. Military briefings in Mindanao remain a significant source of news about terrorist attacks or bombings in Mindanao.

A cursory look at media coverage for the period November 10-12, 2000 shows a very high rate of coverage of religious activities inasmuch as Nov. 11 was the National Day of Prayer. The event is doubly significant because of its political dimensions equating the high turnover of prayer rallyists as a show of support to the beleaguered President Estrada. The prayer rally was covered by almost all media outlets. The Philippine Daily Inquirer and the Kabayan accorded it front page exposure while radio and television stations covered the affair live.

Philippine Media Situationer

Philippine Media Infrastructure. The Philippines enjoys one of the highest media exposure rates in Asia. Consider the present media infrastructure in the Philippines: There are 319 newspapers, 30 of which are in the National Capital Region (NCR). Local weeklies number 214 while there are 24 weekly magazines and 66 comics. National newspapers has a total combined circulation of 1.5 million. One hundred fifty-six television stations operate nationwide, 6 of which are in NCR. There are 402 radio stations, 48 of which are in the NCR. Radio is the medium with the widest reach with television, a poor second. Print, though it reaches only about 1 million households, is still a very important medium since it is a primary source of broadcast news. Often, newspapers set the news agenda which are used by radio announcers in their commentaries.

Commercial-orientation and entertainment focus. In the Philippines, mass media is primarily a business. It exists because it has to turn in profits. A losing business is a lost media. Thus, media cannot help but have a commercial-orientation and entertainment focus. It has to churn out entertaining information to ensure its market palatability. This is especially true for television whose main fare is entertainment. In fact, present news programs in leading television stations have incorporated entertainment value in their newscasts. How does this affect the peace process? As a result of this commercial-orientation and entertainment focus, less emphasis is given to more serious developmental issues like the peace process.

Free press principle-adversarial tradition. It is often said that Philippine Press is the freest in Asia. Patterned after the American concept of the Libertarian Theory of the Press, Philippine media take an active watchdog stance, often critical of government and more often than not, very difficult to control. Sometimes, it has the tendency to engage in “sabong” (cockfight) mentality where personalities are pitted against each other in a media word war. Instead of becoming a mediator of a social dialogue, they become instigators of personality clashes in mass media. If media is often adversarial, how can it effectively espouse social dialogue and other peaceful means of resolving conflicts? Perhaps the idea is best summed up by Melinda Quintos de Jesus when she said that “It is the character of the news that the media choose stories of conflict, confrontation, of collapse in peace talks, of calamity. As someone put it, the bias is for bad news. Such orientation does not favor peace.”

Events versus process reporting. News reporting is often a mere telling of events as they happen without context nor analysis. This makes it difficult for news reporters to package comprehensive, complex, multi-faceted process-oriented, long-term peace programs into interesting bits of news. Though newspaper accounts provide more room for explanations and analysis than radio reports which are often bombast, the daily grind of news reporting often get in the way of developing in-depth, well-researched articles.

Mass Media is powerful. There is no doubt that Philippine media is powerful. Media exposes can break or make one’s professional or political careers. It can catalyze policy reforms, close business enterprises, even get a President impeached. Media personalities are often assured of winning in elections by their sheer popularity and association with credible media organizations. Media power can do wonders for developing a culture of peace.

Philippine Media as Peace Advocates

Media peace networks/organizations/personalities. In late 1994, a group of journalists and government information officers, has organized themselves into an “Alliance of Peace Communicators”. This is probably one of the first alliance of communication people engaged in peace information and advocacy. Five seminar-workshops to update journalist on the government and non-government peace efforts as well as share experiences in covering the peace process were held. There are also a number of professional media organizations that dabbled on peace advocacy. Among these include the Asian Institute of Journalism and Communication (AIJC); People in Communication (PIC); Philippine Association of Communication Educators (PACE); the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism (PCIJ); the Center for Media Freedom and Responsibility and the Philippine Press Institute (PPI).

Media (editorial) policies supportive of Peace. Though there is probably no guidelines yet on covering peace issues, there are a number of media guidelines supportive of peace and non-violence. The guidelines on coverage of violence against women, the Filipino Journalist Code of Ethics and Guidelines when covering children are some examples.

Likewise, during the Manila Forum on the Culture of Peace, it was reported that an agreement was forged between newspaper publishers and the Alliance of Peace Communicators that each media entity shall assign a reporter to cover the peace process. This person shall be assisted to develop a deeper understanding of peace issues.

Media Programs/practices supportive of peace. Provision of free airtime to peace advocates, tri-media coverage of peace activities, religious programs and services such as the Sunday mass on Channel 9 are some examples of media programs/practice supportive of peace. A Manual on Peace Reporting in Mindanao authored by Dr. Crispin Maslog was published by the Phil.Press Institute (PPI).

Downside of Media Coverage of the Peace Process

Although there are some noteworthy media practices as far as peace reporting is concerned, there are also some criticisms that can be hurled against media when covering the peace process. Let's call this the downside of media peace coverage.

One obvious observation is the inclination of media to sensationalize news. Developmental news are never given prominence in either print or broadcast medium. But conflict situations such as the spate of kidnappings in the South were given extensive front page, prime time coverage. Radio announcers when reporting sensational news add to its sensationalism by adding a lot of dramatic innuendos in their reporting of the news often characterized by high-pitched, excitable delivery.

Another observation is the tendency of the media to glorify the other side such as in cases when more dramatic play is given to the rebel side. Many news reports center on the victory of insurgents over the military, the human rights violations by the military alone, scandals etc. This is related to the adversarial characteristic of media where the government is often featured as the "bad" guy.

Developmental news are never given prominence whether in print or broadcast medium. Most of the time, these are relegated in inside pages of newspapers or shown during graveyard slots. Negative reportage greatly outbalance the few reports on development and other positive news.

There is lack of guidelines in reporting about peace. For example in covering conflict situations, can a journalist report troop movements? Should a journalist be allowed to interview one who advocates to overthrow the government?

The multiplicity of media outlets sometimes make it difficult to focus messages. For example, different media may tackle the issues differently and thus result to a muddled message. Inaccurate reporting brought about by the inability of reporters to check and re-check their facts and sources due to lack of time, lack of competence, lack of logistics such as transportation and communication facilities also lead to untruthful dissemination of information which tend to confuse the audience.

Other negative aspects of peace media reporting include: stereotyping, corruption, events reporting vs. process journalism and the tendency of some media men to become overnight “experts”.

Roadmap to Lasting Peace: Some recommendations

The following were the suggestions given by respondents (media and peace advocates) to the exploratory survey on how media and peace advocates can work together to promote a culture of peace.

Media:

- Give different groups/viewpoints equal access to media (as avenues to air their views). Encourage debate and consensus building in the media.
- Media should be open to all groups promoting a culture of peace. This means airtime and space should be provided to stories/reports about promotion of a culture of peace. Reports that tend to incite religion, ethnic and class war should be avoided. Issues affecting such problems should be presented in a more fair and balance way.
- Organize media updates, symposia etc. to allow for a wider dialogue
- Gather media outfits in a conference/fora for this purpose; Regular interaction among various media outfits and between them and the community; dialogue between the media and strife-afflicted areas: enter into a memorandum of agreement
- Media organizations – or outside – meet together and discuss precise ways of working together to promote a culture of peace. As far as the Philippines is concerned, the “culture of peace” has yet to be introduced, discussed, promoted and when a program is organized, implemented immediately
- Government should sponsor scholarships and study grants to media practitioners to further their knowledge in international affairs, laws and policy-making
- Media should practice transparency; rid society of pre-conceptions, biases.
- Everyone should have read or known the historical, social and political perspective of the issue so media can report it accurately according to its socio-political premise not on the prejudices of the reporters.
- Media, NGOs and other organizations should all join hands for the promotion of one common goal, no matter how small. From there, other projects/programs may be achieved and followed by other organizations
- Balance reports on conflicts and not focus on the violence alone. There should also be focus on why the conflict broke out and what/how it can be solved
- There should be conscious effort to tie up with government and NGOs and give ample exposure to their efforts/cause in promoting peace and not on personalities.
- Media must maintain fairness and balance reportage to prevent lopsided presentation of facts; media must serve as a medium to promote peace among sectors in the civil society

- There should be an open line of communication between media and such groups. Conducting interviews with active members and officers/organizers of such groups are necessary and often desirable. Conduct of Meetings, press conferences and open fora.
- Media should spearhead a move to create a multi-sectoral organization that would go down to the grassroots and up the highest echelons of society teaching that peace, not conflict, would be to everyone's benefit

Peace advocate:

- Media not to take sides and not to be allowed to be used as a propaganda arm of either side. Media and various groups should be the source to empower the people to weigh their options and make a sound decision. Media and religious groups should not tell people what to do but to educate them so that the people can decide and choose their own.
- A bonding should be made between religious associations for programs that could carry together promoting peace.
- Media should set-aside their biases and prejudices as a result of too much commercialism and stick to their commitment of seeking the truth and guiding the public to what is right for their welfare; if only media would purge themselves of practitioners who use their profession to foment hatred and commotion for their own vested interest instead of promoting the culture of peace; if only media practitioners would reassess their values and orientation. Indeed, it requires a lot of soul searching on the part of the media for them to be able to work with other groups in successfully promoting the culture of peace.
- Production of posters and radio
- Regular programs in the form of "drama" about peace.
- Media should focus less on violence instead it should highlight the "peaceful" events. With the power it is its hands, as far as influencing people's behavior and opinions is concerned, media should be responsible enough to utilize that power.
- Not to glorify violence in TV, newspapers and radio programs
- Strengthen shows that are culturally bound and spiritual than soap operas
- Accurate reporting and balanced views; accommodations of more socially-oriented ads and information campaign materials of government, peace institutions. Etc.
- Media and peace advocates (Church or religious groups) to sit together and talk about what each can contribute for the betterment of everyone. Religious/peace groups can also be represented in media, by having shows (TV and radio) and columns in the print media. The censorship board can also have representatives from these groups to further screen the rightful shows and articles suited for people of all ages.
- Media associations and other religious/ngo groups have to work closely together, open communication lines and exchange ideas and information; attitude of people/personalities involved should be open, flexible, open to positive and negative criticisms, accept suggestions/comments and the willingness to change for the betterment of the community and people

- Continue exchange of ideas on understanding basic peace concerns, such as social reform, addressing issues of inequity etc.; cooperation/collaboration in peace advocacy; support for community –based peace-building efforts and promotion of indigenous peace-building or conflict-resolution mechanisms; participate in the promotion of inter religious and tri-people (muslim, christian, indigenous peoples) dialogues and tolerance
- Regular for a and dialogues
- More exposure of media practitioners to culture of life and peace
- Media need to be educated and encouraged to support the promotion of a culture of peace

Other recommendations culled from secondary data include:

1. In covering the peace process, reporters have to focus on what has been taken up and not only what has been agreed upon to provide more substantive view of the process.
2. Media should also focus on the people who are greatly affected by the conflict and will benefit from the peace talks.
3. Opinions of victims should be sought and they should not be portrayed as “helpless victims of natural and man-made calamities”.
4. Media should consider their social responsibility and be more development-oriented in its news coverage.
5. Facts should always be verified and that a plurality of source must be practiced. As a guideline, a two-source-minimum must be observed in writing stories to avoid complications.
6. Deviation from the usual “salacious, sensational, scandalous and threatening” news must be practiced by journalists.
7. Journalist should engage in more process journalism or contextual reporting rather than events reporting. Media should a) present any event concerning the peace process as part of an on-going bigger process and link it to the whole chain of events b) be sensitive to the rising surge of energies in the peace process and discover new faces and catalyst c) pay attention to the various elements and issues involved by which people can understand the complex and difficult process.
8. On the part of government as source, government must re-orient their information programs to make it more interesting to media.
9. Likewise, government as well as ngo peace advocates must coordinate its information program implementation in order to have coherence in action and public statements.
10. More media space should be accorded to positive peace news such as the creation of “peace zones”, formation of peace groups etc. NGO efforts which are a rich source of news must be highlighted. This means greater partnerships with NGOs such as church-based groups.
11. More peace-training must be given to media owners and practitioners to empower them to engage in peace reporting as well as to promote the values of peace, non-violence, justice and human rights.

12. Encourage public celebrations of peace, making use of various forms of artistic expression.

Conclusion

In closing, I would like to say quote part of the message of UNESCO Director-General Federico Mayor delivered during the Second International Forum for a culture of peace, to wit:"

"The culture of peace is a task which requires the active engagement of the entire human community – a global movement in which even the humblest contribution carries a moral weight and influence as those of the most powerful and wealthy. It demands a global sharing of resources – of commitment, of technical resources, of finances. This is no less a moral issue than an economic one, a task for teachers and artists as well as politicians and bankers. Everyone has a role to play, some actors in the peace process, other s a s donors, some as providers of technical resources, other s as educators and mobioizers of public support and awareness."

Indeed, each and everyone of us has a responsibility to build this "culture of peace". "As a condition of the human mind" demands that everyone must think "peace" and share in this lofty pursuit.. Perhaps, only then can we achieve lasting peace.

References

Second International Forum on the Culture of Peace held from November 26-30, 1995, Manila Philippines

- Message from the Director-General of UNESCO to the Second International Forum for a Culture of Peace (Manila, 26-30 November 1995)
- Working paper prepared by the Culture of Peace (CPP) UNESCO, Second International Forum for a Culture of Peace (Manila, 26-30 November 1995)
- Paper presented by Melinda Quintos-de Jesus, Executive Director, center for Media Freedom and Responsibility on "The Role of Media in Building a Culture of Peace"

Workshop on Reporting for Peace in Mindanao, September 8-10, 1988, El Corazon Hotel, Cotabato City sponsored by the Philippine Press Institute and the Cotabato Press

- Paper presented by Patricio P.Diaz, Editor of the Mindanao Cross on "Reporting for peace in Mindanao"

The Legal Dimensions of the Peace Process authored by Alberto T.Muyot, Associate Professor College of Law, University of the Philippines

Mediabytes, an NGO-Media Sourcebook

Media for peace

OVER two dozen members of the mass communication academe, media and religious institutions from seven countries are in Manila this week. In a symposium organized by Asian Media Information and Communication

Center (AMIC),

led by Dr.

Sankaran

Ramanathan of

Singapore, the

scholars, practi-

tioners and reli-

gious have come

together on the

theme "Asian Me-

dia in Promoting a

Culture of Peace."

Judging from the

opening speeches

and country reports,

the symposium

promises to plant

new ideas for

promotion of

peace in the

countries involved.

The symposium

is co-sponsored

by the

Japan Foundation

Asia Center and

the

Regional

Communication

Office for Asia,

UNESCO, Kuala

Lumpur, and the

Global

Society for

Peace and

Development. The

countries involved

are Indonesia,

Japan,

Malaysia,

Pakistan,

Philippines,

Singapore

and Sri Lanka.

Religions represented

are

Christian,

Buddhist,

Muslim and

Hindu. The

process involves

presentation of a

research paper

on each country's

media

conditions in

relation to the

culture for

peace and

development,

and then a

response from

the country's

media

representative.

Representatives

from the major

religions in

Asia are present

as observers

and to present

concepts of

peace and the

role of religion

in its promotion.

It is indeed a

gathering of

eminent people,

composed of

directors of

research

organizations,

leading media

practitioners,

faculty

members of

premier

educational

institutions,

religious

leaders and

officials of

the inter-

national

organizations.

The

discussions

also promise

controversy,

on issues

such as

globalization,

privatization,

technology,

civil society,

nuclear

weaponry

and its

tests in the

region,

gender

issues,

among

many others

that promise

to come up.

The

symposium

was opened

by the

address of

the

Global

Society's

secretary-

general

Dr. Anura

Goonasekara.

Focusing

the

body's

attention

on the

resurgent

problems

of

peace

in

many

regions

of

the

world,

he

highlighted

the

tasks

of

the

meeting.

Dr.

Goonasekura,

deputy-

secretary

general

of

the

AMIC

dwelt

on

the

many

problems

posed

facing

media,

in-

cluding

such

issues

as

nationalism.

He

invested

a

high

degree

of

hope

in

the

de-

velopment

of

"civil

society"

which,

of

DIEHARD III



**HERMAN
TIU LAUREL**

and country reports, the symposium promises to plant new ideas for promotion of peace in the countries involved.

The symposium is co-sponsored by the Japan Foundation Asia Center and the Regional Communication Office for Asia, UNESCO, Kuala Lumpur, and the Global Society for Peace and Development. The countries involved are Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore and Sri Lanka. Religions represented are Christian, Buddhist, Muslim and Hindu. The process involves presentation of a research paper on each country's media conditions in relation to the culture for peace and development, and then a response from the country's media representative.

Representatives from the major religions in Asia are present as observers and to present concepts of peace and the role of religion in its promotion. It is indeed a gathering of eminent people, composed of directors of research organizations, leading media practitioners, faculty members of premier educational institutions, religious leaders and officials of the international organizations. The discussions also promise controversy, on issues such as globalization, privatization, technology, civil society, nuclear weaponry and its tests in the region, gender issues, among many others that promise to come up.

The symposium was opened by the address of the Global Society's secretary-general Dr. Anura Goonasekara. Focusing the body's attention on the resurgent problems of peace in many regions of the world, he highlighted the tasks of the meeting. Dr. Goonasekura, deputy-secretary general of the AMIC dwelt on the many problems posed facing media, including such issues as nationalism. He invested a high degree of hope in the development of "civil society" which, of

Indeed, the issue of "civil society" became a lively topic at the table where I sat for the coffee break. Mr. Michael Yap Gim Chuan of the Buddhist Soka Association of Singapore says they are not concerned about foreign influence in their "civil society" because funding is sourced from domestic sources. They have a community chest organization where philanthropic donations are pooled and government matches the funds. Mr. Ghazi Salahuddin, media representative of Pakistan, informed us that there are attempts in his country to consolidate all domestic philanthropic donations to dedicate this to development instead of dole outs.

Ghazi, however, hurried to add that he does support the idea of accepting foreign funding for issue-oriented goals, such as human and women's rights. My concerns were understood when I explained how, in the Philippines, the so-called "civil society" have taken an actively partisan role in politics—and, more frequently than not, outside of the original social and livelihood purposes of the NGOs constituting the so-called "civil society." Michael suggested the "inevitability" of the expansion of "civil society" because of the Internet's access to all peoples. I explained that in Third World countries, not one percent of the population has Internet and the vast majority still rely on governance to survive.

Before the coffee break we had the excellent report from Dr. Binod C. Agrawal of the Taleem Research Foundation from India. Binod expressed concern over the impact of globalization on Indian media reporting, such as crisis news (such as a train crash with scores of casualties) being relegated to inside pages while an international beauty contest result hogs the front pages. Ms. Sudhakshina, principal correspondent of The Hindu, broadly agreed with her compatriot but raised a number of memorable good and bad points from the globalization of media, such as the advancement of women's rights but, at the same time, the spread of consumerist values.

A highpoint on the first morning was Indonesia's presentation, from the newest "free media" in the region. Dr. Zulkarnain Nasution of the Department of Communication of the University of Indonesia read a well-researched paper. Ms. Santi Soekanto, senior editor of the Jakarta Post, gave a frank, honest and straightforward response to the experience of this new freedom in Indonesia journalism and media. Has the new freedom helped in promoting peace in Indonesia? Can media be really effective in the establishment of peace? Ms. Soekanto's sense of anguish about the capabilities of media to affect the real environment tells us much.

When there are ethnic, religious or political groups determined to disrupt peace, such as in Ambon and Maluku, the media can only do so much. We, Filipinos, can understand that. ♦