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SOME  
REASONS FOR  
OPPOSING U. S. AID TO MARCOS.

by

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(Text based on remarks made at)  
(a conference of Concerned Asian Scholars)  
(Chicago, March 30, 1973)

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#### THE MORAL ISSUE.

While the implementation of the Vietnam peace accord remains at the center of foreign policy concerns for many thoughtful citizens, conditions in the Philippines have become such as to demand attention as well, for reasons at once moral, ideological and political.

After President Ferdinand Marcos declared martial law in September 1972 the State Department announced that it had no comment to make on Marcos' action, and up to the moment of writing the Nixon Administration has preserved a non-committal attitude toward the Philippine military dictatorship. Some of this may be due to reservations the Administration has about Marcos himself; in any case it is largely a matter of form. The fact is that the United

States at the moment supplies Marcos with arms and ammunition whereby he keeps himself in power, and it is this United States support for a repressive dictatorship over and against the Philippine people that presents the moral issue. If there is one thing the Vietnam War has taught, ~~to many~~, it is that the people of the United States have a responsibility to the people of the Philippines to put an end to such U. S. intervention in their affairs.

But, it may be objected, the United States government supports in like manner any number of repressive governments over and against other Third World peoples. Why single out the Philippines? It is because the people of the United States bear a special responsibility to the Philippine people. The United States government has been carrying out a policy of repressive intervention in their affairs for over seventy years. So while it is perfectly true that, in a moral sense, the people of the United States have bills outstanding with many peoples of the Third World, the bill they owe the Filipinos is one of the longest overdue.

The intervention of our government in Philippine affairs goes back to the Spanish-American War and its sequel in the United States war against the Philippine nationalists at the turn of the century. In 1896 Philippine nationalists rose in armed revolt against Spain's colonial rule of their country. In April 1898, at a time when the Philippine revolt was gaining new momentum, the United States declared war against Spain. A month later Admiral Dewey destroyed the Spanish fleet in Manila harbor and helped bring U. S. victory. Dewey also gave aid and encouragement to the Philippine nationalists in their revolt, but it was largely through their own efforts that the Philippine insurgents defeated the Spanish military on the main island of Luzon in June 1898. Then the Philippine nationalists declared their country's independence, and six months later, in January 1899, established a Philippine Republic. One month after this, the Republican Administration of William McKinley made war on the <sup>NEW</sup> Philippine nation, decisively defeating it in 1902, ~~and~~ turning the Philippines into a colony of the United States.

Why did the United States make a colony of the Philippines? There were several reasons, but in the fall of 1899 McKinley gave expression to one of the most important. According to the Philadelphia Ledger of October 28, 1899 McKinley told a member of his cabinet that "the natural resources of the islands will attract large numbers of Americans who must be protected." McKinley explained, with typical racist arrogance, that the Filipinos were of a low moral quality, prone to murder and theft. Therefore, said he, the United States government would have to remain indefinitely in the Philippines in order to provide protection to those

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Americans who "will enter the forests and mining districts, and ... take an active part in shaping the future of those islands."

This, it could be maintained, has been a major concern of U. S. policy toward the Philippines ever since -- the only difference being that today, rather than a U. S. colonial administration doing the job, a suborned Philippine government protects U. S. business interests from the Philippine people.

To sum up: the people of the United States have allowed their government to repress Philippine aspirations for independence and well-being for over seventy years. It is time to call a halt. ~~It is our duty to do so.~~

#### AN EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY.

One of the leading ideas of the apologists for establishment foreign policy is that the United States is not an imperialist power. The argument rests on a one-sided identification of imperialism with outright colonial annexation and it runs something like this: the United States once was, around 1900, an imperialist power as is to be seen from the colonial annexation of the Philippines, Puerto Rico and Hawaii at that time. But that was long ago, and since then the United States has annexed no more colonies. In fact it has liberated its most important colony, the Philippines.

Indeed, the U. S. grant of Philippine independence on July 1946 plays a big role in the ideal construct of U. S. foreign policy promoted by its defenders. Thus General Douglas MacArthur (whose father conquered the Philippines for the U. S.) on the occasion of Philippine independence said to a Filipino friend: "On this day the United States buried

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imperialism." And this was the impression the establishment press created at the time.

But examination of some of the facts surrounding the newly independent Philippine state of 1946 and the Marcos regime of today tends to prove that United States imperialism has not been and is not now dead, but very much alive and simply working in another manner. It has been expanding its dominion not by means of colonies, rather by means of governments nominally free and independent, in fact, however, subject to United States influence. United States imperialism, in other words, operates by means of a new colonialism, or neo-colonialism (the hyphenated word that means the same thing).

Despite its name (which denotes the fact that the other imperialist powers began to apply this policy generally only after World War II) it is not a new policy for the United States government. On the contrary its origins date back to the period of the conquest and annexation of the Philippines. This conquest and annexation called forth a determined armed resistance on the part of the Philippine people which, <sup>WHILE INITIALLY DEFEATED IN 1901, WAS</sup> ~~lasted from 1899 to 1906, and~~ <sup>SECOND TIME</sup> it called forth, as well, a massive political opposition in the United States which brought millions of voters out in opposition to imperialism and colonial annexation in the elections of 1900.

It was the exigencies of this political situation both at home and in the Philippines that caused leading officials of the United States government to back away from a policy of colonial annexation, so that by 1901, for example, President Theodore Roosevelt let it be known that he anticipated eventual independence

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for the Philippines. Consequently, almost from the very first, the United States government put forward the U. S. colonial administration of the Philippines (established soon after conquest) as an agency to prepare the Filipinos for self-government, as the saying went. <sup>PATRONIZING</sup>

Accordingly in 1907 the United States government granted Filipinos the right to elect a legislative assembly, or lower house, in 1916, a senate or upper house. In 1935 the United States granted the Philippines "Commonwealth" status, which gave the Filipinos control of the executive branch (subject to formal U. S. supervision). Thus when the United States government granted the Philippines independence in 1946, this was but the culminating step in a process of de-colonization (or neo-colonialism) that began almost simultaneously with annexation.

It was at the municipal level that this process of Filipinization first took place. In 1900 President McKinley sent a letter of instruction to U. S. officials in the Philippines which, among other things, granted Filipinos the right to elect Filipinos to municipal office and thereby control municipal government. Speaking, in this letter, of the Filipinos that would be elected to office, McKinley declared that "an indispensable qualification for all offices and positions of trust in the Islands must be absolute and unconditional loyalty to the United States." McKinley's letter of instructions is authoritatively regarded as the basic document in the elaboration of United States policy toward the Philippines. Certainly "loyalty" to the United States on the part of Philippine government personnel has been a high priority of Washington policy, both before and after Philippine

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independence.

To ensure a supply of such "loyal" Philippine citizens the United States government, even before the consummation of military conquest, started a program of public education in the Philippine Islands to teach what McKinley called the "benevolent" purposes of the United States in the Philippines, and the English language. It is interesting, moreover, that the United States insisted on a United States citizen as head of the Department of Education until the last moment in 1935, well after other executive departments had been turned over to Filipinos. Washington's empire-builders, therefore, regarded cultural or ideological domination as a key aspect of policy in the Philippines.

In the years 1900-1946, at the same time that Washington was preparing for the establishment of an independent but servile Philippine government, United States business interests were turning the Philippines into an economic dependency of the United States. Furthering this process, Washington, in 1909, established a policy of free trade between the United States and the Philippines, the net result of which was to establish that nation as an agrarian economy, dependent on the United States both for its supply of manufactured goods and for its market for Philippine raw materials.

When the United States government granted Philippine independence in 1946, it took steps to ensure the continued economic dominance of United States business interests in the Philippines by its insistence upon the parity amendment to the Philippine constitution. This amendment removed United States businessmen from statutory limitations on the foreign ownership of Philippine land

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and natural resources and gave Americans equal rights in this regard with Filipinos.

Since parity amendment-independence the United States investment in the Philippines has grown from 200 million dollars in 1935 to 2 - 3 billion dollars at present, so that U. S. capital controls about 50% of Philippine economic resources, a fact which may help explain some of Marcos' behavior.

For the Marcos regime has, since martial law, stepped forward as the "loyal" protector of United States interests in the Philippines. Marcos has assured U. S. investors of friendly treatment despite the legal expiration of the parity amendment in 1974. He has announced the virtual nullification of two pre-martial law decisions of the Philippine Supreme Court: the first, denying U. S. citizens the right to own land in the Philippines; the second, denying U. S. citizens the right to participate as managers or executives in firms doing business in the Philippines. As special favors to the U. S. oil industry (which has a 400 million dollar investment in the Philippines) Marcos has granted it a price increase and full rights to conduct retail sales in the Philippines (another privilege under recent legislative and judicial attack). In addition he has granted Texaco and Chevron rights to exploit Philippine off-shore resources with generous tax abatements.

What has all the foregoing to do with ideology? It is just this -- an understanding of the Philippine situation might help many U. S. citizens understand the current neo-colonialist reality of U. S. imperialism. From serving as a buttress in the ideological defense of the United States establishment, the Phil-

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ippine question might well turn into a means of undermining that ideology and exposing its hypocrisy.

#### THE POLITICAL NECESSITY.

The Philippines can be seen as a laboratory in which current U. S. imperial policy, applied so bloodily in Vietnam, was first fully developed. From the Philippine experience came the formula for U. S. neo-colonialist policy at its most effective: economic control, ideological control, military control, and "political independence."

The U. S. military control of the Philippines has shifted from direct to indirect in accord with the shift from a colonial to a neo-colonial system of rule. From 1901 to 1935, a small Philippine armed force, the Philippine Scouts, was an auxiliary of the United States Army in the Philippines. In 1935 the Commonwealth government appointed U. S. General Douglas MacArthur "Field Marshal" to direct the development of the Commonwealth Army, formally separate from the U. S. military force. By terms of the Military Assistance agreement signed shortly after independence in 1947, a body of United States military officials (called the Joint United States Military Advisory Group or JUSMAG) was set up in the Philippines to advise and assist the Philippine Armed Forces (successor to the Commonwealth Army), and there it is today, advising and assisting the Marcos regime in its attempts to suppress the guerrillas in Luzon and Mindanao.

(While, therefore, the evolution of U. S. military influence in the Philippines parallels that of U. S. political influence, moving from direct to indirect, the exercise of U. S. military

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supervision is formally recognized and centralized in JUSMAG, whereas U. S. political pressures remain more hidden, more diverse. Indeed, JUSMAG itself is an example of this last phenomenon, since it is a potent means of exercising political influence by military means.)

The weight attached to the U. S. military personnel in the Philippines can be judged from the fact that under the terms of the 1947 Military Assistance agreement Washington has supplied, and still supplies, the Philippine Armed Forces with its arms and equipment.

Moreover the military dominance of the United States in the Philippines is further secured by an agreement (also signed at the time of independence) whereby the Philippines ceded land to the United States to be used over a prolonged period of years for some 20 military and naval bases, including Clark Air Field and Subic Naval Base, two of the United States' largest bases anywhere in the world and key to the United States' strategic position in Asia.

The ominous political significance of this to the people of the United States lies in the fact that their government's military support for the Marcos dictatorship may lead to another Vietnam, ~~This may happen~~ for two reasons. First, the political position of the Marcos regime may weaken in the face of growing popular opposition, and, secondly, the United States government may escalate its aid to save its neo-colonialist rule in the Philippines.

The majority of Filipinos are malnourished; many thousands

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are unemployed or under-employed; prices have skyrocketed and wages are low; the majority of the population live off the land, either as tenant farmers or agricultural laborers; many tenant farmers are hopelessly in debt and agricultural laborers earn 50 - 60 cents a day; there are thousands of unemployed students and professionals; Filipino businessmen suffer from U. S. competition. All this discontent, poverty, misery has caused, in recent years, a wave of popular and nationalist unrest, including the guerrilla warfare, and it is altogether the purpose of the Marcos dictatorship to check this many-sided agitation and struggle by means of bans on free speech, strikes and demonstrations, by offensive measures against the guerrillas.

There are unmistakable signs that the opposition to Marcos has not been checked by martial law. Early this winter Marcos declared a period for the free public discussion of a new constitution proposed by a Philippine constitutional convention. He also announced that there would be a national plebiscite on this new constitution. However the opposition to Marcos expressed in this period of free discussion was so sharp and so widespread that the dictator felt impelled to cancel the free discussion and the plebiscite. Instead he pushed through the new constitution by means of rigged "citizens' assemblies."

Moreover strong resistance to Marcos has been shown by the guerrilla movement in Mindanao and the Sulu Islands, led by the Moslem Revolutionary Forces. Here the press has reported that the guerrillas control half the island of Mindanao and most of the Sulu Islands, with the Marcos forces unable to crack this

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control at the first of April despite a month-long offensive.

The Mindanao region is an area in which there is a heavy U. S. investment in fruit and rubber plantations by such corporations as Dole Pineapple and Goodrich Rubber. Guerrilla control, of course, threatens these investments, and the effort of the Philippine Armed Forces, equipped with U. S. arms and under the general direction of the JUSMAG, is to relieve that threat. Again Marcos steps forward as the "loyal" protector of United States interests in the Philippines.

U. S. military aid to the Philippine government averaged 23 million dollars per year from 1946 to 1970. Last year, the executive request for Philippine military aid was 20.8 million dollars. In the present situation the Philippine Minister of Defense Juan Ponce Enrile (in private life corporation lawyer for Dole Pineapple), has told the Wall Street Journal that "he expects U. S. military aid to double from its present level," and that "American officials are sympathetic."

This, then, is the political question facing the voters of the United States -- will they allow an escalation of U. S. <sup>AND ECONOMIC</sup> military aid to the dictator Marcos to occur, carrying with it the threat of U. S. intervention Vietnam-style, to save the 2 - 3 billion dollar U. S. corporate investment in the Philippines and the imperial military bases?

Or will the U. S. voters and taxpayers insist on an end to all military and financial aid to Marcos (or to any other repressive and puppet regime that might follow) so that the Philippine people, may, at last, be allowed to determine their own destiny without United States interference?