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THE PHILIPPINES — ANOTHER VIETNAM?

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by

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THE PHILIPPINES — ANOTHER VIETNAM?



It is fitting that citizens of Boston should acquaint themselves with conditions in the Philippine Islands at the present moment. The United States government conquered the Philippine Islands by force of arms in a war that lasted officially from 1899 to 1902, and the people of Boston and Massachusetts were most active in opposition to that war. In 1903 an eminent Bostonian, Edwin D. Meade, said of the Philippine-American War: "I think it will not be denied that the country at large has recognized Boston as the centre of the opposition to this unhappy war." Lest some think Edwin D. Meade guilty of Massachusetts chauvinism, let me quote the remarks a Philippine citizen, Martin P. De Veyra, Jr., made in Boston two years later. "I wish to offer tribute," he said, "to Massachusetts for fostering more than any other state the spirit of liberty and independence for the Filipinos."

Massachusetts played this role 70 years ago because the state was the effective headquarters of a national organization that opposed the Philippine War, called the Anti-Imperialist League.

Today Massachusetts has been especially active in opposition to the Vietnam War, as the McGovern vote here testifies. It is fitting that once more the people of this city should turn their attention to the Philippines, as that country threatens to become another Vietnam .

How is it possible to speak of the Philippines becoming another Vietnam?

On September 21 of last year Ferdinand E. Marcos, president of the Philippines, declared martial law, in effect setting up a military dictatorship over the Philippine people. Now this act puts him in an almost identical situation to that of President Diem in South Vietnam ten years ago.

In the Philippines there is widespread opposition to the Marcos dictatorship as there was to that of Diem in Vietnam. In the Philippine countryside there is guerrilla warfare being waged against the Marcos dictatorship.

Like the Diem regime, that of Marcos is entirely dependent on the military and economic aid it gets from the United States government.

As in Vietnam, the opposition to the Marcos regime is led by those, in the city and in the countryside, who consider themselves the champions of their country's independence from foreign imperialism and its subservient Filipino politicians and military men.

How did this situation arise? How have the Philippines been brought to this unhappy circumstance?

THE FIRST CONFRONTATION

United States involvement in Vietnam goes back only some 20 years, when American intervention in Vietnamese affairs replaced that of France after that nation's defeat at Dienbienphu in 1954. United States involvement in the Philippines goes back to our government's military conquest of those islands some seventy years ago. In fact, United States military aid to the Marcos regime against a guerrilla insurgency represents the third confrontation Washington has had with militant Philippine nationalism in the 20th century.

Like that of the Vietnamese, the militant resistance of the Filipinos to foreign imperialist intervention has very deep roots. In 1565 the Spanish empire made a colony out of the Philippines, setting up, in those islands, a feudal regime, dominated by Spanish landlords and the Catholic Church. This Spanish colonial regime appropriated Philippine lands and fields and turned many Filipinos into serfs and tenant farmers; it subjected all Filipinos to heavy taxation and forced labor.

Spain ruled those islands for some 300 years, and in those 300 years there were some 200 armed revolts or-

ganized by Filipinos against their Spanish masters. In 1896 an armed revolt of workers and peasants broke out against Spanish rule, with land reform and the break-up of the feudal estates as one of its main goals. This revolt took on such proportions that the Spanish Governor General became worried and promised concessions to the leaders of the revolt if they would lay down their arms and go into exile. This they did, but by 1898 armed revolt had broken out once more in the Philippines against Spanish rule.

This was the situation that existed when the United States declared war on Spain in April, 1898. Admiral Dewey, whose task it was to defeat the Spanish fleet in the Philippines, got in touch with Emilio Aguinaldo, the chief Philippine insurgent leader who had gone into exile in Hong Kong. Dewey got Aguinaldo's agreement to return to the Philippines to lead the Filipino struggle against Spain, and provided Aguinaldo with transportation on a ship of the United States Navy.

Then Dewey smashed the Spanish fleet in Manila harbor and Aguinaldo and the Philippine nationalists defeated the Spanish military on Luzon, the main island of the Philippines, driving the Spanish into the city of Manila where they were besieged.

After their military victory over the Spaniards the Philippine insurgents declared their nation's independence and set up a Philippine Republic under the leadership of Aguinaldo.

Meanwhile, behind the back of the Filipinos Dewey arranged for the Spaniards to surrender Manila to the Americans alone, so that the United States military occupied Manila and denied the Philippine insurgents access to the capital city of the islands.

That was in August, 1898 — and six months later American troops sent over by President William McKinley for that purpose were waging war against Aguinaldo and the Philippine nationalists, their former allies against Spain.

The Filipinos, though isolated diplomatically and lacking equipment and weapons, fought the United States Army for some three and one-half years, first by regular and then by guerrilla warfare. Finally, the superior military strength of the United States overcame the Filipinos. Then the United States proclaimed the Philippine Islands an American colony and so ruled them for over 40 years.

Why did the United States make a colony of the Philippines seventy years ago? Everyone knows the story President McKinley told of his worry about what to do with the Philippines after the defeat of Spain, of how he spent sleepless nights pacing the floor of the White House, finally to fall on his knees in prayer. Then the Lord told him to annex the islands, so as to uplift the natives and bring them to civilization.

To balance this picture it should be noted that Massachusetts Senator Henry Cabot Lodge told the Republican Party in 1900: "We make no hypocritical pretense of being interested in the Philippines solely on account of others . . . We believe in trade expansion." Moreover Lodge's friend, Cushman Davis, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said that the United States must have the Philippines to protect its interest in the China market, where, Davis might have added, Rockefeller's Standard Oil trust and the New England textile industry sold kerosene and cotton cloth to Chinese peasants.

While McKinley gave voice to the racist ideology of "the white man's burden" that accompanied the United States establishment of commercial empire around 1900, Senator Lodge expressed the desire for foreign markets for manufactured goods and surplus capital that was the basic motivation of the Spanish War and the subsequent annexations.

Trade expansion was the purpose to which the Philippine colony was put. In 1909 the United States Congress established a policy of free trade with the Philippines that allowed United States industries to dump their pro-

ducts on those islands, with the result that the Philippines became one of the United States' big markets in Asia. The free trade policy prevented the development of Philippine industry in the face of this competition from American manufactured goods. It fastened an agrarian economy on those islands, turning them exclusively to the production of raw materials, sugar, tobacco, hemp. At the same time it fastened the Philippines to the United States as the main market for Filipino raw materials, so that the islands became doubly dependent on the United States, first as the supplier of their manufactured goods, then as the purchaser of their agricultural products.

THE SECOND CONFRONTATION

While both the Filipino people and the Americans who resisted the conquest of the Philippines were defeated at the turn of the century, their struggle, and particularly that of the American oppositionists, the anti-imperialists, left a definite mark on the subsequent operation of United States foreign policy.

After the conquest of the Philippines, the United States empire builders turned away from colonial annexation to a policy of imperial expansion by other means, by means of economic penetration, by means of political pressure, by means of military intervention, by all means short of outright annexation. This policy saved the expense and complication of colonial administration, but more important still it could be carried out without arousing large-scale domestic opposition.

Utilizing this new policy (which is now generally called neo-colonialism) American imperialism could hide its operations from public view since it operated through governments that were nominally free and independent, but that were, in fact, subservient and subject to United States influence.

The second confrontation between militant Philippine nationalism and United States imperialism developed in the middle of this century, after the 2nd World War, when the United States finally applied its neo-colonialist

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policy to the Philippines themselves. In July 1946 the United States government declared the Philippines to be no longer a colony of the United States, declared them to be free and independent.

On this occasion establishment newspapers in the United States were very enthusiastic. "Look," they exclaimed, "how wonderful it is! The United States freely grants the Philippines their independence. This proves beyond the shadow of a doubt that the United States is no longer an imperialist power."

The establishment press was just as enthusiastic about the Philippines and their new independence, hailing the islands as "the show-case of democracy" in Asia.

In actual fact the situation was somewhat different, as an examination of the conditions which the United States government imposed on the Philippines as the price of independence will prove.

First of all the United States government insisted on what was called the parity amendment to the new Philippine constitution. This constitution, as originally written, had declared that only corporations with 60% Philippine ownership could own or exploit Philippine land and natural resources. By terms of the parity amendment, this provision was waived with respect to United States businessmen, so that they had equal rights with the Filipinos to the ownership and exploitation of Philippine land and resources, and a privileged position with respect to businessmen of other nations. The United States threatened to withhold much-needed aid from the Philippines, ravaged as those islands were by World War II, unless the parity amendment was adopted.

The second condition insisted upon by the United States government at this time was the cession by the Philippine government of some 20 military bases on Philippine soil for the United States to use for 99 years.

The new Philippine government was led by President Manuel Roxas and a measure of the new government's

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independence was to be seen in the fact that it granted the United States both these privileges, thus ensuring a continued pre-dominance in their country for representatives of American empire.

Not all Filipinos, however, acceded so easily to these new conditions. During World War II the Philippines had been occupied by the Japanese, and a guerrilla resistance movement, called the Hukbalahap, or Huks for short, had arisen against the Japanese occupiers. The leaders of the Hukbalahap were Communists and its membership was largely based in the peasants of Central Luzon, who had a long tradition of struggle against the exploitation of both Spanish and Philippine landlords.

During the war the Huks fought side by side with the United States armed forces to drive the Japanese from the Philippines, and they were most effective in their resistance. But after the war the Huks refused to lay down their arms. They declared their opposition to the parity amendment and the military bases agreement. Six representatives of the Huks were elected to the Philippine Congress and their votes would have prevented the passage of the parity amendment which required a 3/4 vote. To get around this difficulty the Roxas government trumped up charges against the Huk representatives and threw them out of Congress. Thus the parity amendment was passed.

Not long after this, the Philippine government undertook a campaign to suppress the Huks by force of arms. This campaign was under the direction of a United States C. I. A. operative, Colonel Edward Lansdale, who took a desk in the office of the Philippine Department of Defense and became advisor to that Department in connection with the suppression of the Huks. (Later Lansdale went to Vietnam where he advised Saigon with less success.)

By 1954 the Huks were defeated, so for a second time in the century, Philippine nationalism suffered a defeat at the hands of United States imperialism. It is true that,

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unlike 40 years earlier, the Philippine nationalists had not been conquered directly by United States troops. Rather they had been conquered by the armed forces of a servile Philippine regime, acting under the direction of United States managers, and armed with United States equipment.

The pre-eminent role of United States imperial personnel in the defeat of the Huks was attested to by the influential and conservative magazine, *U. S. News and World Report*. In its issue of March 13, 1967, this magazine wrote: "In the Philippines . . . suppression of the Huk uprising in the early 1950s is counted as one of the CIA's great, but largely unpublicized victories."

MARTIAL LAW.

Some twenty years after the defeat of the Huks, stimulated by the worsening conditions of the Philippine people, a resurgence of Philippine nationalism has occurred, affecting peasants, workers, middle-class, liberals, conservatives and radicals. While the sharpest expression of this nationalism is a new movement of armed revolt, another guerrilla movement called the New People's Army, the nationalist upsurge is of greater breadth than this, reaching into the ranks of the opposition party of the Philippine establishment, the Liberal Party, into the Philippine Congress, and into the very ranks of the Philippine Supreme Court.

In the face of this growth of nationalist opposition, President Marcos declared martial law on September 21 of last year. A few days after martial law was declared the United States State Department announced that United States Philippine relations were excellent and refused comment on the Marcos declaration.

Once more the directors of the United States empire by their support for military dictatorship in the Philippines (which is far more than mere tacit support as we shall see) are maneuvering into position for a showdown with the forces of Philippine nationalism, the third such showdown in this century.

What happened? Why have the Philippine Islands, hailed only 25 years ago as "the show-case of democracy," turned into a military dictatorship? This can be explained in a sentence or two. The Marcos dictatorship is the result of 25 years of United States neo-colonial domination; it is the result of the make-believe Philippine independence of 1946, complete with military bases and parity amendment.

In the 25 years of the parity amendment, United States big business has strengthened its hold on the Philippine economy. In 1935 United States business interests had 200 million dollars worth of capital invested in the Philippine Islands. Today United States business interests have between 2 and 3 billion dollars invested in the Philippines. With the exception of Japan, the largest amount of United States capital in Asia is invested in the Philippines. United States capital in the Philippines controls the strategic industries of those islands: communications, chemicals, rubber and petroleum.

Why, it might be asked, has there been this growth of United States investment in the Philippines? There is at least one reason. That is the extra profits Philippine investment affords American big business. A Philippine government study shows that from 1956 to 1965 the ratio of profit to investment of 108 United States firms in the Philippines was around 18%. This compared with about 14% in the United States. Moreover, certain Philippine industries showed even higher returns. Thus in 1965 the profit rate in basic metals was 35%; in the extractive industry, 27.5%; in food manufactures, 25.2%.

At the same time the remittance of huge profits to United States investors impoverished the country and drained it of its wealth. The government study quoted above shows that during the years 1956 to 1965 these same 108 United States firms brought into the Philippines 79.4 million dollars in investment and took out of the Philippines 386.2 million dollars in profit.

A reason for higher profits in the Philippines is not hard to find. It is cheaper labor costs. That is why the Ford Motor Company is planning to open a new assembly plant in the Philippines to produce cars for the Asian market at low cost. That is why the Dole pineapple company is moving operations from Hawaii to the Philippines. The labor is cheap.

As for that section of the Philippine economy dominated by Filipinos, here again is to be seen a vast gap between the wealth of the few and the poverty of the many. It is estimated that out of a population of 38 million people some 400 families, known as the Oligarchy, own 90% of the wealth, and that 40% of these 400 families own ½ of that.

In the days when the United States held the Philippines as a colony, these wealthy families provided the base for United States colonial rule. Since July, 1946, these wealthy families have provided the base for United States neo-colonial dominance. Since the parity amendment-independence a quarter of a century ago, these families, operating through the two major parties, Liberal and Nationalist, have held the machinery of the Philippine government in their hands. This government has been, for the most part, friendly to United States business interests, and, for the most part, notoriously corrupt. Lest anyone imagine that this corruption is especially a Philippine trait, let us remember that our experience with the Nixon Administration suggests that friendship with United States big business and corruption in government are closely connected.

Marcos, himself, is a member of the ruling Oligarchy and he is notoriously corrupt. The *Wall Street Journal* says of his two terms of office: "The president himself dealt in the traditional policies of patronage and pork-barrel, and in the process became a millionaire many times over."

In sharpest contrast with the wealth and luxury of the 400 ruling families is the poverty of the overwhelm-

ing majority of the Filipino population. Imelda Marcos, the president's wife, was recently in Washington for the Nixon inaugural, and the papers reported that she and her party spent \$6,000 in one day's shopping at Cartier's, the elegant jewelry store. Yet, the average per capita income in the Philippine Islands is about \$158 a year. The average Filipino gets 500 calories a day less than the minimum nutritional requirement. Functional illiteracy stands close to 50 per cent of the population. 8 per cent of the population is unemployed, and 25 per cent is underemployed.

In Manila the wealthy live in suburbs like Forbes Park, surrounded by walls and armed guards; their mansions are set in the midst of well-kept lawns and gardens. But, according to Tom Buckley, writing in *Harper's* a year ago,

At least one third of the population of greater Manila are squatters. There are 250,000 in Tondo. In this city within a city, dwellings are hammered together of scrap wood, cardboard, and bent rusting sheets of galvanized iron. The streets are alleys five or six feet wide. There are no sewers. Rivulets of waste water turn the packed earth to a slimy mud. There is no drinking water. A fifty gallon drum, drawn from a public tap at the edge of the settlement is sold for two pesos.

Most of the people of the Philippines, however, live in country villages called barrios. An American observer writes: "Life in most barrios remains extremely primitive. The majority of families live in rickety houses that are set up on stilts, so they won't be flooded out during the rainy season, and that have no plumbing." Country people usually eat three meals a day, but only two per day are not uncommon. They eat rice supplemented with vegetables. Meat and fish are rarely eaten because they are too expensive.

As a result of the United States free trade policy which has prevented the growth of Philippine industry,

about 75 per cent of the people in the Philippine Islands earn their living from the land. The majority are tenant farmers and agricultural workers. Tenant farming, though common enough under Spanish rule, has increased under United States dominion. 29 per cent of the farm population were tenants in 1903, but in 1964 more than 50 per cent were tenants. While Philippine and American landlords have largely supplanted the Spanish, the exploitation remains the same, with tenant farmers paying their landlords 50 per cent or more of their crop as rent and forever falling in debt.

The condition of the Philippine agricultural workers is even worse. Moreover, evidence shows that the number of agricultural workers is rapidly increasing, due to mechanization, shortage of land as against population growth, etc. *Harper's* Tom Buckley spoke to an Italian Jesuit priest, Reverend Hector Mauro, who a year ago was trying to organize these workers. This Jesuit had served in China from 1939 to 1952, and he said that even there "I never saw the exploitation of man by man that I have seen in the Philippines."

Philip Shabecoff, a *New York Times* Manila correspondent, in March, 1970, gave a graphic picture of the condition of these agricultural workers on some haciendas (plantations) producing sugar cane that he had visited.

But first it should be pointed out that in the year before Shabecoff's visit the United States government had bought the entire Philippine sugar crop, paying the planters 4 to 5 cents a pound more than the nominal world market price. Evidently the planters made sure that this bonus stayed in their pockets, if Shabecoff's observations are any clue. He wrote:

Conditions on the haciendas are almost unbelievably appalling. Although some of the planters are said to obey the law and treat their workers decently, not one of the haciendas visited on a two day tour paid their workers the legal minimum wage of 4 pesos — less than a dollar

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— a day. Most of the planters were paying 60 cents or less . . .

On a nearby hacienda, a man, his pregnant wife and three children aged 10, 12 and 15 worked cutting cane in a small field. It was a special contract, with the man and woman getting 60 cents a day and the children 30 cents.

'It is not work for women and children, that is true,' said the man, 'but we must eat and I cannot earn enough by myself.'

The children had never been to school, seen a movie or tasted ice cream. Even the 10 year old never has time to play. When the children are not cutting cane they take care of the hacendero's (planter's) carabao (water buffalo) for 25 cents a day.

'There is no way things will get better,' the man said. 'If the Communists come here, we will go back with them to the hills. If they gave me a gun I would kill the hacenderos.'

It is no wonder, then, given these conditions, that in 1969 a new guerrilla army, based again on the peasants and lead again by a newly-organized Communist Party, should come into being. That is the New People's Army currently in action in the Philippines. The New People's Army claims 2,000 full-time guerrillas, and 10,000 additional local guerrilla fighters. Official government estimates concede that its strength has doubled in the recent past, and early last year Defense Minister Enrile confirmed the New People's Army claim to have set up 800 village organizations with over 400,000 supporters in 18 of the country's 67 provinces.

Parallel to the armed revolt in the north of Luzon carried on by the New People's Army is that carried on in the southern part of the Philippines on Mindanao by Muslims. This is directed against the land-grabbing and discrimination practiced against Muslims and is mixed in leadership, with landlords as well as peasants participating.

But, as has been said, armed revolt represents merely the tip of the wave of national unrest that has surged forward in the Philippines in recent years. Working people and peasants have shown a new militancy in political and economic struggles. A massive student movement has been especially active. Not since the 30s has there been such a wide range of protest and demand for reform, such a great number of strikes and demonstrations as in the past few years in the Philippines.

Moreover, Marcos' martial law evidently came as no surprise to participants in this broad movement for Philippine regeneration. In May, 1970, Benedict J. Kerkvliet, a professor of the University of Hawaii making a study of agrarian conditions in the Philippines, interviewed a group of peasants in the village of Ricardo in Central Luzon. One of these was a member of the MASAKA, a peasants' union active in organizing for better conditions. This peasant leader said, "You know, we in MASAKA wouldn't be totally surprised if martial law were declared in order to wipe out groups like ours who are seeking justice for the people." That was almost 2½ years before Marcos took the step.

As the peasant leader remarked, Marcos' declaration of martial law can be seen as an attempt to put a check to the widening struggle of the mass of the Filipino people for well-being and independence.

If leaders of the popular struggle have believed that the possibility of a turn to martial law has existed for some time, what was it that triggered the event? In other words, granted the general background, what were the more immediate, the more particular causes of martial law?

In the first place it must be understood that the provisions of the parity amendment were due to expire in 1974. Then, presumably, United States investors would have to divest themselves of anything more than 40 percent ownership in businesses exploiting Philippine land and natural resources. United States investors, in other words, were due to lose their privileged position in the Philippine market.

What was most startling, perhaps, to American business interests was the action of the Philippine Supreme Court in August, 1972. The Court made a ruling to re-affirm the legality of that provision of the parity amendment calling for a curtailment of United States ownership in 1974.

The fact that the Philippine Supreme Court, certainly a conservative body, made this ruling at all, is another indication of the breadth of the nationalist sentiment in the Philippines at the present moment. Moreover, it can be related, perhaps, to the growing restiveness of the small Filipino manufacturing class under the oppressive weight of the United States business presence in the islands.

A few weeks after the decision of the Philippine Supreme Court re-affirming the end of the parity amendment, the United States Chamber of Commerce in Manila, representing American investors in the Philippines, called upon Marcos to declare martial law.

On September 21 United States Ambassador Byroade spent several hours with President Marcos -- and on that same day Marcos declared martial law. With his declaration of martial law Marcos abolished constitutional liberties in the Philippines. All newspapers other than Marcos' own paper were prohibited; radio and television were censored. There was a round-up of critics of the government and they were thrown in jail some 2,000 strong. Besides trade union leaders, professionals and intellectuals, members of Congress were thrown in jail. Marcos put Benigno Aquino, the wealthy leader of the opposition Liberal party behind bars; in this country that would compare with Nixon jailing McGovern. Marcos set about ruling by military dictatorship.

Almost the first thing Marcos did after declaring martial law was to call foreign correspondents to the Presidential palace to announce that as long as martial law was in effect United States investors would not have to worry about their investments; he, Marcos, would not

observe the termination of the parity amendment in 1974; American investors and businessmen would continue to enjoy a privileged position in the Philippine Islands after that date under martial law.

What is interesting is that Marcos did not allow news of his statements re-assuring United States investors to be printed in the Philippines; he gave them only to American reporters for printing in the press of the United States.

Also significant is the fact that Marcos, right after martial law, announced that restrictions governing the leasing of natural oil deposits to foreign oil firms had been relaxed, had been made easier for foreign investors. This action must be placed against the fact that the largest single bloc of United States investment in the Philippines is the 400 million dollars worth owned by five giant United States oil firms, Mobil, Esso, Caltex, Getty and Gulf.

About a year ago a Philippine Constitutional Convention started to meet to draft a new constitution for the islands. In April, 1972, five months before Marcos declared martial law, a delegate to the Philippine Constitutional Convention, Alejandro Lichauco, drew attention to a powerful lobby of American oil companies which was pressing the Philippine Congress for just such a relaxation of restrictions on foreign development of Philippine oil resources as Marcos put into effect after martial law. Giving further testimony to the general awareness of the danger of a military dictatorship, Lichauco warned the Constitutional Convention of the possibility of an "imperialist" coup d'etat in the government to ensure American control of off-shore oil exploration in the Philippines. Is it necessary to add that Lichauco was one of the first Marcos clapped into jail after martial law?

If the need on the part of United States investors to get around the expiration of the parity amendment in 1974 appears very plainly to be one of the immediate

causes of martial law, another such cause appears to be the fact that Marcos' second term of office was to expire in 1973 and that the Philippine constitution prevented him from running for a third term. Thus, unless the constitution was set aside, Marcos would have to step down from a position worth millions of dollars to him in graft and corruption. So Marcos set aside the constitution and declared that he intended to rule for an indefinite time by martial law.

It was evidently the coincidental need of American investors and the Philippine head of state to protect privileged positions for self-enrichment that was the immediate occasion for martial law.

The reasons here given for martial law are derived from the sequence of events surrounding the declaration of martial law; they are based on fact. The reasons President Marcos gave for martial law appear to have another derivation altogether.

Two months after the event Marcos let it be known that before declaring martial law he had asked God whether it would be correct to do so, and God had told him to go ahead. What makes this doubly strange is that seventy years earlier McKinley claimed that God told him to annex the Philippines. If both these stories are true, it can only be concluded that the Almighty has got the habit of giving bad advice about the Philippines. It is more likely, however, that both McKinley and Marcos mistook the voice of Rockefeller for the voice of God.

On the other hand, President Marcos has announced that he proclaimed martial law to initiate a New Society, to introduce a period of reform, the most important of which is to be land reform; — that is, the landless tenant farmers and agricultural laborers of the Philippines are finally to be provided with land. Since land reform is next to independence in importance to the Philippine people, it is obvious that if Marcos were to deliver on this question he would win support at home. Judging from past experience this is not likely. Marcos has been talking about land reform ever since coming to office years ago and has done very little to carry it out.

Marcos now says he intends to carry out the land reform law of 1963; that is to be his program. But the law of 1963 protects large landowners and even allows them to replace tenants with machinery. Thus, there is no guarantee that peasants would benefit even if this law were implemented. It might instead mean many more agricultural laborers working for low wages. In addition the reform would not touch the large estates that produce major export crops such as sugar, pineapple and copra.

Marcos finally declares he moved to martial law to prevent imminent overthrow of the government by force and violence. In support of this he cites the rash of bombings and acts of violence that occurred in Manila prior to martial law, and the existence of the New People's Army, which he connects with the bombings.

But just before Marcos declared martial law his top security body had stated that the situation in relation to rural guerrilla activity was no more serious than it had been for the past few years, that it represented at most a localized threat to the status quo. As for the urban bombings and acts of violence, Marcos has never been able to offer any evidence to pin them on the guerrilla forces. In fact, with respect to the last such episode, the so-called assassination attempt on the life of Defense Secretary Enrile, the Manila correspondent of the *Wall Street Journal* pointed out that when it took place, Enrile for some reason was not riding in his official car as was customary, and that the "assassination attempt" was discussed and planned for days before in the offices of the government. No wonder, since it was the unsuccessful attempt on Enrile's life that Marcos used as the occasion for the declaration of martial law.

Marcos is evidently not too convinced himself as to the plausibility of the reasons he gives for martial law, for he has since sought to give it a semblance of popular approval and support, the taint of legality, so to speak. He now flourishes a new constitution taken from the hands of the Constitutional Convention dominated by his

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supporters. This new constitution replaces the presidential, bicameral government on the American model which the Philippines have had since 1946 with a British-style cabinet government. Under this new dispensation he would serve as prime minister, and his leadership as military dictator would be cleared of unconstitutional third term connotations.

At first he announced that he was going to submit the new constitution to the people for full discussion and formal plebiscite. But such widespread public opposition developed during the brief period of free debate allowed that Marcos apparently took fright, for he cancelled the discussion, postponed the plebiscite indefinitely, and hastily called together what he termed citizens' assemblies in different places. These gatherings, by public show of hands, under the nose of government agents, ratified the new constitution. The *New York Times* reported from Manila that public interest in these citizens' assemblies was "languid," their attendance slim.

Marcos' attempt to get public support for his dictatorship therefore backfired against him and turned into a demonstration of non-support, making all too clear his political isolation.

Mrs. Marcos is reported to have said recently to a friend, "Do you think that having got this far, we will let go? Remember we have the Army." In the face of growing political isolation, Marcos relies on the Philippine Army for support. Now it is just in relation to the Philippine Armed Forces that the neo-colonial domination of the Philippines by United States empire-builders is most directly revealed. In 1947 as part of the package that included the parity amendment and the military bases agreement, the Philippine government entered into a Mutual Assistance Pact with the United States under which the United States would furnish arms, equipment and supplies to the armed forces of the Philippines. The agreement also provided for the creation of a United States Military Advisory Group which would advise and assist the Philippine Armed Forces. This United States

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Military Advisory Group also supervised the Philippine Army in the suppression of the Huks in the early 50s, so that the C. I. A. must share the credit for that achievement.

But it is not only the Philippine Armed Forces that receive the support and backing of the United States government. Under the auspices of the United States Agency for International Development (A. I. D.) \$3.9 million of United States taxpayers' money was appropriated to train and equip the Philippine police force over a four-year period from 1969 to 1973. These monies have been spent to improve the capacity of the local police apparatus to spy on political activists and opposition political organizations, suppress strikes and mass demonstrations, protect American-owned businesses from guerrilla attack and labor unrest.

Thus American counter-insurgency experts trained the Philippine police who made the round-ups after martial law and threw leaders of the opposition into jail. And it was with the help of United States military advisors and equipment that Marcos stepped up the drive against the New People's Army after martial law, when, for example, he evacuated 53,000 peasants out of the highlands of Isabela province where they served as a support for the guerrillas, and dumped them, hapless refugees, in the lowlands of that province. American soldiers in the Philippines report that planes, given to the Philippine military by the United States and flown by Philippine pilots on bombing missions against peasant guerrillas, take off from the United States Air Force Base at Clark Field. All this is as in Vietnam. Where will it lead?

Marcos claims that he installed martial law to prevent another Vietnam and calls for American support on this score. But Marcos, by imposing martial law, by throwing his critics into jail, by driving the opposition underground and depriving it of any legal expression, has in all likelihood taken the one single step that he alone could take to ensure the Philippines becoming another Vietnam. Professor Kerkvliet of the University of Hawaii writes:

After martial law I think rebellion in the countryside is more likely . . . The reason is that now even heavier repressive measures have been pressed down on the people, adding to the impoverished conditions they face each day. Repression in this instance can be a self-fulfilling prophecy; rather than stop dissent and unrest as its implementors claimed it would do, it may do precisely the opposite.

This was certainly the case in Vietnam, where it was the repression of the Diem regime, the denial of all democratic rights, that led to civil war in the south, with consequences all too familiar to every American citizen.

At the moment United States involvement in the suppressive activities of the Marcos dictatorship is mainly covert and indirect, in the form of military and police advisors and equipment. This is as it was in the first stage of the United States Vietnam involvement. Should the position of the puppet regime worsen, as did that of the Saigon government, and as is altogether likely in the Philippines, there is the possibility of direct United States involvement, there is the possibility of open commitment of United States armed forces to preserve neo-colonial rule. This could be done even more easily and quickly than in Vietnam, because United States troops and equipment would not have to be gathered at home and transported miles away. They are already there. In 1970 there were reported to be nearly 20,000 United States troops manning 20 United States bases in the Philippines. There is much United States military equipment at these bases, many planes of the United States Air Force at Clark Field, many ships of the United States Navy at Subic Naval Base. What is to prevent the commitment of these men, planes and ships should United States neo-colonial rule in the Philippines appear to be really threatened?

When Alejandro Lichauco warned the Constitutional Convention of the danger of a military dictatorship designed to ensure United States control of the Philippine

off-shore oil resources, he connected martial law in the Philippines with the Vietnam War, in which he said United States control of off-shore oil was also at stake. (In this light, the Marcos dictatorship takes its place beside the military dictatorships in Thailand, Indonesia and South Vietnam, all standing guard over South East Asian off-shore oil reserves for United States corporations.)

But there is this big difference in the Philippine and Vietnam situations. There was little United States investment in South Vietnam before the Vietnam War; South Vietnam was important to United States corporations more as a potential source of investment than otherwise. But the Philippines are not only important potentially (as in the case of off-shore oil); there is a 2 to 3 billion dollar United States investment present there today.

Not only that, but the military-strategic importance of the Philippines is vastly greater to the United States empire than South Vietnam ever was. Suffice it to say that the Philippines were a major staging area for the war in Vietnam, without which it would have been very difficult to carry on that war. With two major bases — Clark Air Force Base and Subic Naval Base — with many thousands of American military men involved in these and other bases — the Philippines represent the essential military fulcrum for United States imperial interests in Asia.

From all this it can be judged whether Richard Nixon, Nelson Rockefeller and the other leaders of the American empire will be inclined to intervene with all the resources at their command needed to prevent the growth of the national liberation movement in the Philippines, a movement which would eventually lead to the liquidation of United States investments and military bases in those islands.

There is, however, one factor on this side of the Pacific that can end United States involvement with reactionary

military dictatorship in the Philippines, can prevent the development of another Vietnam in the Philippines. That is the interdiction of the American people, calling on Congress to cut off all military and economic aid to the Marcos regime and to withdraw all United States troops from the Philippine Islands. Many Americans played a significant role in forcing Washington to back away from the war in Vietnam. They can similarly prevent United States involvement in the Philippines on the order of Vietnam.

Besides stopping another United States military intervention in Asia, a movement to end aid to Marcos would be significant for American democracy at home. Let no one forget that the Philippine Islands represent a colored Asian people. Just as the Vietnamese War against the colored Vietnamese people fanned the growth of racism and white supremacy in the United States, the continued domination of the colored Filipino people by the United States corporations and the United States military can only encourage the growth of racism at home. And white racism in turn encourages the growth of the most reactionary and anti-democratic forces in American life. Witness the role of the Wallace vote in electing Nixon to office in 1972.

In 1900 the Boston anti-imperialists warned that the conquest of the Philippines, a colored Asian people, would undermine black rights and democracy in the United States. The same is true of United States military intervention, whether open or covert, whether direct or indirect, in the Philippines today.

It is certainly not to the interest of American labor that the United States government support the union-busting Marcos regime. That can only lead to further loss of jobs by American workers at the hands of corporations like Ford which transfer operations abroad to take advantage of poorly paid labor.

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Moreover, as long as the American people are burdened with a foreign policy that puts defense of corporate empire as the first order of business, they will never be able to turn the United States government away from armaments and military adventure to the building of schools, hospitals and homes in the United States, to solving the problems of the cities and the transportation and ecological crises.

For these reasons I urge all present to write Senators and Congressmen urging that the United States cut off all aid to Marcos and call home the troops from the Philippine Islands.