

# FOOTNOTE TO REVOLUTION AND SOCIAL CHANGE (THE PHILIPPINE CASE)

ERNESTO R. MACAHIYA

## INTRODUCTION

THE PAPAL NUNCIO<sup>1</sup> DESERVES COMMENDATION PARTICULARLY FROM the Filipino elite for a timely remark he made recently about the Philippines. When he said "the Philippines today is sitting on top of a volcano," he was actually cautioning this elite to brace themselves for the eruption of a social revolution. Indeed, it is this group who should be more concerned about the implication and meaning of said remark for it is they who will most likely suffer the wrath of the suffering Filipino masses.

Certainly, no one can deny that the Philippines today is plagued by a variety of complex social problems. Poverty, disease, graft and corruption, worsening peace and order—these are but few of them. Yet, while we accept their reality, some people seem to have failed in tracing their origin. Some draw conclusion from history and see the cause of these problems to foreign domination; others to the decline of morality and other similar Christian values while still others may consider the inherent nature and character of the social system as the one responsible for bringing them about.

Each of these views carries an element of "truth" which, in one way or another, contributes to the understanding of the problem.

Generally speaking, however, these views and interpretations cannot claim validity if taken in isolation from each other. This is because historical events are not mere dead leaves that fall on the ground. They are manifestations of man's purposeful activities. Let us consider the following: If man is to survive, he would be needing certain basic and necessary requirements like provisions for food, shelter and clothing. Charles R. Darwin,<sup>2</sup> in explaining the theory of natural selection, considers man's scramble over the available material resources (which are either ready-made given by nature or, as man started to labor, products of man's productive activity) as a factor that motivates the development of man. Shortage of said requirements puts him in a state of physical imbalance. This, in turn sets his mind to work. He begins to conceive and formulate notions in the hope of finding explanations to such

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<sup>1</sup> The Papal Nuncio, the Vatican Ambassador to the Philippines made this observation in a speech before a group of Filipino officials last year. See *Daily Mirror*, April 22, 1968, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> See Charles R. Darwin *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* (1859) and *Descent of Man* (1871).

condition. His mind reacts either actively or passively. Active if it displays positive reaction like providing an objective view of the problem, thus giving rise to objective solutions. On the other hand, mental passivity is manifested in the statement "this is my fate, my destiny." In either case, the result is the construction of varying philosophies, system of values, beliefs, morality, ideology, etc. (Here, religion and religious concepts begin to enter their initial stage in a long process of evolution and development.) In turn, these notions influence man's physical activity and behaviour. Ivan P. Pavlov dramatizes this idea in his now famous experiments on conditioned reflexes. He said, "The complex and diverse activity of the cortex determines all the forms and manifestations of the psychical and physical activity in animals and man."<sup>3</sup> Then man builds institutions and establishes different forms of social systems.

The foregoing shows the direct connection between man's physical and mental spheres of activities.<sup>4</sup> We observe that there is not only a unity but also a constant, now subdued, now discernible interaction and struggle between them. It is on this basis that the above-mentioned views and approaches if taken in isolation from each other and when applied to Philippine situation may not bring about a true and meaningful picture of the society. There is a world of complex phenomena between them, yet together, they form a single unity.

But leaving aside for the moment these points of view, some social critics also consider society as if it is in a state of perpetual equilibrium. They advance the notion that social problems are mere distortions or simply unwelcomed "impurities" in the social set-up. We must therefore, so they say, seek for factors that will normalize the "convulsion." In a word, these critics are motivated by the desire to return to harmony, to that "elusive social equilibrium" as C. Wright Mills put it.<sup>4a</sup>

This line of thinking, typical of some of our contemporary sociologists is faulty on two counts. First, it tends to deny the dynamic character of social development. Normalization or harmony in society cannot and should not be viewed in absolute terms. It is a relative, temporary and transient condition where people enter into a form of *modus vivendi* while settling social disputes. Secondly, this state of mind negates the division of society into social classes whose interests contradict each other.

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<sup>3</sup> Ivan Petrovich Pavlov, *Selected Works* (Moscow, 1949), p. 518.

<sup>4</sup> For a more detailed analysis of this relationship see Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Pure Reason* (London: 1881, vols. I and II); G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophical History*; V. I. Lenin, *Materialism and Empirico-Criticism* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1967) and Jean Paul-Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956).

<sup>4a</sup> See C. Wright Mills, *Power, Politics & People* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 74.

With the above considerations in mind, we shall attempt to analyze Philippine society today. The social problems of the country will be described in the light of its history and, in general, its social system.

### THE PROBLEM

The Philippines today has a sick society.<sup>5</sup> In this critical period of its development, the country rests, as we mentioned earlier "on top of a volcano." The danger pictured in the metaphor is a social revolution which necessarily assumes a violent character since a volcano does not erupt with a mere sigh.

Pope Paul VI, in his encyclical *Populorum Progressio*, states rather candidly the general problems of mankind:<sup>6</sup>

Freedom from misery, the greater assurance of finding subsistence, health and employment; and increased share of responsibility without oppression of any kind and insecurity from situations that do violence to their dignity as men . . . in brief, to seek to do more, know more and have more: that is what men aspire to know when a greater number of them are condemned to live in conditions that make this lawful desire illusory.

Obviously, this observation is too vague and general. But in any case, His Holiness recognizes the fact that men "are condemned to live in conditions that make this lawful desire (freedom from misery, etc.) illusory." This is the general problem.

On the other hand, the problems peculiar to the Philippines are as follows: poverty, graft and corruption, peace and order and lack of *political maturity*. (The last is emphasized because of its special significance which we will describe later.) There are still a host of other problems but these are the most important.

In the Philippines, social critics have expressed these ills in one form or another. In newspapers, magazines and journals, observations critical of the sick nature of the society have become the rule rather than the exception. Political commentators and pundits have equally expressed in depth the same sentiments. Even in the halls of Congress, some Filipino leaders, spurred either by the necessity of bowing to the sweeping tide of revolutionary change or because of the desire to express another of their usual rhetorics also echoed the same tune with equal pompousity.

These expressions of concern, however, redound only to the following, namely, that it is the government and public officials who are guilty of the crimes that gave rise to said social problems and, that the people, as a consequence of such misdeeds have long been languishing in the quag-

<sup>5</sup> *M.A.N.'s Goal: The Democratic Filipino Society* (Quezon City: Malaya Books Inc., 1969), Foreword, (pamphlet).

<sup>6</sup> Pope Paul VI, *On the Development of Peoples* (Pasay City: St. Paul Publications, 1967), p. 5.

mire of social injustice. The views of these critics are always expressed in behalf of the people and at the expense of the government and corrupt public officials. As a result, people are made to believe that if there should be a meaningful change, it must necessarily come from "above" or from those in the position of power.<sup>7</sup>

Again, this line of thinking we believe, is erroneous because it is premised on idealist assumptions. These critics fail to recognize the objective reality of the laws of social development. To regard the misdeeds of the officials as the real cause of the people's misery is to bark at a wrong tree. The solution to these problems can hardly come from *above*. It lies hidden, unexplored and unharnessed in the minds and practical activities of those *below*.

#### COLONIALISM AND THE ELITE

The era of colonization was no accident in the long history of civilization. It was bound to happen because of the inherent nature of our social system. It was dictated by the development of the economies of leading European countries hitherto known to be the centers of civilization. The rise of merchant capital (mercantilism) replaced the old economic relations in feudal Europe. As monarchies crumbled, the leading position, prestige and power of the aristocracy and noble gentry continued to dwindle until their final collapse. This in turn ushered in the emergence of a new powerful class of capitalists—the merchants and industrialists. The rise into power of this new class brought about a corresponding radical transformation in the spheres of culture, religion, philosophy and government. Liberalism, Protestantism, Materialism, Democracy and Constitutionalism struggled against the remnants of the old decaying philosophies and culture. The leading cliques in these countries spurred by the strength of their newly-acquired power took notice of expanding their economic interests beyond their territories. They did this either through private ventures or in direct alliance with their government. Thus the hitherto unknown continent of Asia became the focus of their attention. The search for new trade routes and markets for their finished products coupled with the visionary zeal of exploiting the vast resources of Asia, brought them in contact with peoples with an entirely different kind of culture and civilization. But before they did this, they had to clothe their coming to the region by a frock of humanitarian values. Christianity and Civilization (western) were such appropriate tapestries. They propagandized the idea of the "white man's burden" ostensibly to bring to the Christian fold these Asian "savages." Thus Asia became a huge arena of the power struggle among the leading colonialist

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<sup>7</sup> Social critics in the Philippines are still undeniably under the influence of the 18th and 19th century social theorists. One can easily see this through the pages of the *Free Press*, *Graphic*, *Nation*, *Examiner* and other leading journals, weeklies and newspaper columns in the Philippines.

countries. The British took possession of India, Malaya and Burma, Indonesia became the colony of the Dutch, the French settled in Indochina (Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam), China became the property of all while the Philippines became a precious "pearl" in the Spanish Crown.

The coming of the Spaniards has had a tremendous impact on the nature and character of Philippine society.<sup>8</sup> They imposed upon the natives a bizarre replica of the Spanish social system. In the field of economics, production was arranged not only to ensure Spanish monopoly of Philippine exportable goods but also to see to it that its economy falls within the orbit of Spanish economic structure. Christian or Catholic values and concepts replaced (except for a few Muslim *principales* in the South) the pagan outlook of the Filipinos.<sup>9</sup> To carry this out, churches and other religious institutions with a corresponding system of hierarchy were built in different municipalities. To the old *barangays* or villages was super-imposed a highly centralized form of government headed by a Spanish Governor-General. From this group of traditional leaders like the *Rajah* and *Datu* evolved the elite class of the *casiques* and the *inteligentsia*.

For more than 300 odd years of Spanish domination, Philippine society took a sluggish pace of development. However, everything was not at all bleak and hopeless. During the later part of the last century, the liberal ideas of Europe were filtered into the country and soon crystallized in the minds of the Filipino *ilustrados*.<sup>10</sup> Nationalism, independence, sovereignty and other similar ideas became the beacons in their struggle against the colonizers. But, as was to be expected, this reformist group did not go beyond certain limits. They assumed a dual character in relation to the revolution. While they advocated for change in the colonial set-up, at the same time they were afraid of losing the privileges they were enjoying in the *status quo*. Thus, their concept of independence was equated to such feeble demands as representation in the Spanish Cortes and the secularization of the Philippine clergy. These demands reflect with clarity the class bias of this group. Under the proposed change, they were the ones that would directly reap all the benefits.

Not until the Filipino people reached a certain degree of political maturity that the need for a drastic change in the entire colonial set up was realized. This was considered to be the only way out to genuine independence. It was Bonifacio and the *Katipuneros* who grasped correctly the need of the hour.<sup>11</sup> To them, continued suffering can only be checked by driving

<sup>8</sup> See Teodoro A. Agoncillo and Oscar Alfonso, *History of the Filipino People* (Quezon City: Malaya Books Inc., 1967), p. 213.

<sup>9</sup> To date, Mindanao and Sulu islands are still dominantly inhabited by Filipino Muslims.

<sup>10</sup> A Spanish term denoting the intellectuals.

<sup>11</sup> See Teodoro A. Agoncillo, *The Revolt of the Masses: The Story of Bonifacio and the Katipunan* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines, 1956) and Cesar A. Majul, *The Political and Constitutional Ideas of the Revolution* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines, 1957).

the Spaniards out. Thus, while the privileged class of the *ilustrados* was advocating for reforms *within* the set-up, Bonifacio and his group were for the termination of the *entire* Spanish hegemony. While the masses were fighting heroically at Balintawak and Cavite, Jose P. Rizal, the Philippine national hero, was on his way to Cuba as a volunteer-physician in the service of the Spanish Crown.

When the revolution was nearing its final completion, the Americans appeared in the Philippine shores. Their control of the country was facilitated by their superior arms and the capitulation of the reformist group in whose hands the leadership of the revolution later on fell.<sup>12</sup> Unlike their predecessors, the Americans showed an aura of genuine concern for the Filipinos. They brought with them the latest discoveries in science together with a new kind of culture and civilization—one that was far advanced than the Spanish version.

Thus, the Philippines was again subjected to a new kind of foreign influences. In economics, agricultural production was made to answer the demands of the American market. Being a colony, however, the flow of Philippine products to America free of tariff, engendered competition to American agricultural producers. Because their economic interests were threatened, this group of American tycoons were for the granting of immediate independence to the Philippines. But industrialization by this time had already taken root in America. A new and different class of big industrialists and merchants (as distinguished from the group of agricultural capitalists) had taken the lead in pressing their government to venture into colonization. They saw the necessity of finding outlets for their finished products. A viable source of raw materials for their industries was also needed. The Philippines answered precisely these requirements.<sup>13</sup> The conflict of economic interests between these two groups of American capitalists was finally resolved in a ten-year interregnum starting in 1935, a few years after the Great Depression—the granting of the Philippine Commonwealth.<sup>14</sup>

A similar development also happened in the Philippines. Under the new economic set-up, a group of comprador-landlord grew out of the old elite. The economic interests of Filipinos belonging to this group coincided with those of the American industrialists. These Filipinos became the apologists for the colonizers. They advocated not for independence but for statehood in the American Union. Thus, the platform of the *Federalista Party* actually had its beginnings in the economic interests of these people.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Cesar A. Majul, *Mabini and the Philippine Revolution*, "The Diliman Review," vol. 4, nos. 1-4, 1957.

<sup>13</sup> See Horacio de la Costa, *Readings in Philippine History* (Rizal: MDB Printing, 1965), p. 87.

<sup>14</sup> The Philippines enjoyed a ten-year period of semi-independence from 1935 to the granting of full independence on July 4, 1946.

<sup>15</sup> A Philippine political party founded during the American occupation whose main ideology was for the Philippines to become part of the American Federation.

To reinforce and maintain the new socio-economic relations, a different kind of cultural orientation likewise had to be cultivated. The Philippine system of education answered this need.<sup>16</sup> Thus the American Thomasites were charged with instilling American values and ways of life to these tradition-bound Filipinos.<sup>17</sup> English was made their language. America became not only as a symbol of progress and affluence to them but also as the paragon of truth, democracy and freedom.

Before independence was finally granted, however, the war in the Pacific broke out. The Philippines being a semi-colony was dragged into this war. The elite group of Filipinos, true to their opportunist tradition, instead of fighting for America collaborated with the Japanese.<sup>18</sup> However, the good graces they were enjoying under the Japanese protectorate did not last long. Japan's power in the Pacific did not withstand the "return" of the powerful "army" of General MacArthur. Japan was finally defeated. Again the Filipino collaborationists had to show their allegiance to the United States. This they did and continue to do so up to the present.

History, then, shows the long process of evolution and development of the Filipino elite. The era of colonization and its impact particularly in the fields of politics, economics, culture and religion vividly illustrate not only the evolution but also the behaviour toward change taken by this class. We also note its class bias, its narrow and parochial outlook together with its opportunist tradition. This is the reason why the change that can come from "above" cannot be complete and meaningful.

#### SOCIETY AND PEOPLE

Society is a huge social system of compromises among men of different color, religion, country and class. Man founded society, lived in and developed it. Society is unthinkable without man while man cannot live outside of society. "Man is a social animal" says the Greek philosopher Aristotle. Within the society, all spheres of human endeavours are conducted through the institutions which man himself created. These institutions were founded to give justification to man's prevailing philosophies. This is not to say, however, that institutions are products "only" of the mind. On the contrary, the development of philosophies is primarily a reflection of the developments in the material world outside of man. Material is primary and society as a whole was founded to suit man's material needs.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Renato Constantino, *The Mis-Education of the Filipino*, "The Filipinos in the Philippines" (Quezon City: Filipino Signatures, 1966), p. 39.

<sup>17</sup> A group of 300 American teachers came to the Philippines during the early period of American occupation aboard the ship "Thomas." They became the first teachers in the Philippine system of education. They came to be known as the *Thomasites*.

<sup>18</sup> See David J. Steinberg, *Philippine Collaboration in World War II* (Manila: Solidaridad Publishing House, 1967).

<sup>19</sup> G. Kursanov (ed.), *Fundamentals of Dialectical Materialism* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1967), p. 87.

The individual and society are enmeshed in a complex and endless process of interaction. Martin Hiedegger, the German existentialist philosopher maintains that there is "an eternal antagonism between the individual and society."<sup>20</sup> However, since society's institutions are mere creations of man, he must therefore reign supreme over the system and must never allow the reverse to happen. But speaking of today's society, Pope Paul VI says:<sup>21</sup>

It is unfortunate that on these new conditions of society, a system has been constructed which considers profit as the key motive for economic progress (sic), competition as the supreme law of economics and *private ownership of the means of production as an absolute right that has no limits and carries no corresponding social obligation*. This unchecked liberalism leads to dictatorship rightly denounced by Pius XI as producing *the international imperialism of money*. (italics supplied)

Evidently, this observation is also true in Philippine society today. Under the present set-up, only those in the upper bracket of the society are given the benefit of living in a "civilized" way. Majority of the population live on subsistence level.<sup>22</sup> Change, therefore, is imperative. Its direction should be toward progress—to uplift the lot of many by increasing their share in the national wealth. Because the change that the elite can generate is limited, the greater responsibility of giving solution to said social problems rests primarily on the Filipino people.

Unlike their leaders, the Filipino people have a limitless capacity for change. An Asian leader declares that "of all things in the world, people are the most precious . . . as long as there are people, every kind of miracle can be performed."<sup>23</sup> The revolution of 1896 could not have been possible and successful had it not been due to the people's participation in the movement. The Reform Movement of Rizal and his group while serving as a catalyzer for change, alone could not have brought about the desired goals of the revolution. We noticed that Rizal himself in the final hour capitulated and was against the revolution at the time arguing that the time was not yet ripe for it. He wanted more time to prepare, people must first be educated, arms must be purchased.<sup>24</sup>

But then, precisely, who are the Filipino people? Definitely, they are not the writers, commentators and politicians who talk of sufferings while

<sup>20</sup> Martin Hiedegger, *Being and Time* (Sein und Zeit), translated by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), p. 276.

<sup>21</sup> Pope Paul VI, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

<sup>22</sup> The Philippine Bureau of Statistics and Census reveals that 90 per cent of Filipino families have income of less than P5,000 or roughly P417 a month. Only 1 per cent of the families have an income above P24,000 a year or P2000 a month. On the average, there are about seven members in a Filipino family. (M.A.N.'s Goal, *op. cit.*), p. 18.

<sup>23</sup> Mao Tse-tung, *The Bankruptcy of the Idealist Conception of History*, "Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung" (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1967), vol. 4, p. 454.

<sup>24</sup> T. A. Agoncillo, et al., *History of the . . .*, *op. cit.*, p. 203-4.



in exclusive social gatherings, in the halls of Congress or simply in their flashy offices. These critics belong to the elite class, though perhaps in a relatively lower category compared to the big Filipino compradors and landlords. As such, they also bear the ugly marks and tradition of the elite and therefore cannot be relied on. They are expected to take a limited position regarding social change.

The Filipino people may be classified into three groups: first, those who suffer from the ills of society but who lack the necessary political consciousness enough to make them understand why they are suffering; second, those who suffer, are conscious of their lot and who do something to solve it within the existing social set-up; and third, those who suffer from the ills of society, are conscious of their suffering and who do practical activities to solve their problems within the existing social set-up *but at the same time recognize its inherent limitations*.

These classifications should not and cannot be viewed in absolute terms. They are used mainly as a convenient tool in identifying the social forces that distinguish one group from the others. They are not exclusive and closed groups of people with characteristics unique only to their class. On the contrary, they are mutually dependent and interlocking groups of impoverished individuals. There is fluidity between them and a man may belong to one group today and to another tomorrow depending upon circumstances.

Suffering is the thing common to these three groups. This problem may either be material or spiritual. We will not discuss spiritual suffering here since it is purely personal and is basically rooted on faith and other similar idealist notions. Besides, spiritual suffering is only a mere adjunct of the material.

The first group of people are those who suffer from the ills of society but who do not possess the necessary consciousness enough to make them understand why they are in such condition. It is easy to identify these people. They are the most numerous of the groups. They live either below or at subsistence level. They are either employed, unemployed or underemployed. They may come from any sector of the society—workers, farmers, street sweepers, drivers, beggars, office workers, etc. Their reaction to suffering is basically passive and oftentimes account their fate to God. Their mind is usually vacuous to ambition. Their perennial problem is how to make both ends meet. Their entire philosophy in life can be reduced mainly to the problem of survival.

The second group of people are those who suffer, are conscious of their fate and who do something to carry on the desired change *within* the existing social set up. These people are less numerous than those in the first group. They live below, at subsistence level or a little above it. They too, may be employed, unemployed or underemployed. If unemployed, they get their subsistence either from their meager trade or small properties.

They may come from any sector of the society. Their reaction to suffering is generally active. They entertain materialistic ideas and their religiosity is only nominal. They are ambitious and desirous of a quick rise to affluence. Selfishness and intense individualism pervade in their personality. They have tasted a minimum of luxury. Compared to the previous group, they are not as much concerned with their next meal. With painstaking efforts, they believe they can improve their lot *within* the set-up.

The third group are those who suffer, are conscious of their problems, do practical activities to solve them within the existing social system but at the same time *recognize its inherent limitations*. They are less numerous than those in the previous groups. All the rest of their attributes are similar to those in the previous category. What makes people belonging to this group different from the others is *the degree of their social and political consciousness*. Their materialistic outlook makes them realize the materiality of their suffering. They consider themselves part of the society consciously plotting its course and direction. They recognize the transient nature of the social system, its laws and system of values. They see their suffering not as an end in itself but only a manifestation of the system's inherent nature and character. They believe that the solution to their problems cannot come from the benevolence of those in power but something that must be fought. As such, they are as much concerned with power as those in the elite. This awareness puts them in a better position than the rest since they can articulate and, if given the opportunity, concretize their demands through political action. Thus, they may be active in labor, peasant, student and other similar reformist movements. This group can provide leadership to the entire people.

It is this political maturity and social consciousness that a society like the Philippines is very much in need of. This is the consciousness that has yet to be developed among its people in order to bring about a meaningful change. It is indeed unfortunate that there are only a few Filipinos endowed with this kind of awareness. One German philosopher and sociologist considers this lack of consciousness as a serious social problem when "people have not yet learned the objective laws of the world . . . do not see the causes of the phenomena of nature, life, death, etc. . . . the uncognized economic laws which led the bulk of the people into one kind of slavery to another." Not until the Filipino people recognize the need for re-orienting their outlook and values; for objectively analyzing the social forces at work in their society today; for the realization of their legitimate demands from the government and society; these social problems will continue to assert themselves. This is the reason why the absence of political maturity is as much a problem in Philippine society today as the other social phenomena described above.

## THE SOCIAL SET-UP

Basically, the Philippines is still a colonial country. A nation has no claim to sovereignty and independence if its economy is still tied up, if not outrightly under the control of the foreigners.<sup>25</sup> Shortly after formal "independence" was granted to the Filipinos, the Americans had already stripped them of whatever economic independence they can ever hope for. From 1946 onward, the Americans imposed upon them a series of agreements that placed their economy within the orbit of American control. Some of these treaties are: the RP-US Trade Agreement of 1946<sup>26</sup> and its later version the Laurel-Langley Agreement; the Economic and Technical Cooperation Agreement which was the consequence of the Bell Trade Mission of 1951; the agreement granting entry rights to US traders and investors signed on September 6, 1953; and finally, the Agricultural Commodities Agreement which provided among other things the forceful buying of American exports by the Filipinos.

A recent survey shows that more than 50% of tax revenues in the Philippines come from foreign-owned businesses and corporations of which 20 per cent is American.<sup>27</sup> Under this set-up, the Philippines cannot have a genuine and meaningful industrialization program. Foreign monopolies would never tolerate competition with Filipino-owned corporations. A case in point is the Fil-Oil<sup>28</sup> Company which, after a brief period of operation was swallowed by the Atlantic Gulf and Pacific Co., another giant American firm.

The extent of foreign investments, particularly American, in the economy is further aggravated by their strategic nature and location. Vital industries like mining, petroleum, chemicals, drugs, tire and transport are virtually under alien control. Leading hotels, banks, insurance companies and other financing institutions are also in the hands of foreigners. As a consequence, huge profits are regularly being remitted outside of the national economy which in turn has disastrous effects on the gold reserves of the country.<sup>29</sup> Also, because of these considerations, the development of a Fili-

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<sup>25</sup> A survey of the top 100 corporate taxpayers for 1968 in the Philippines shows that 80 of them are either partly or wholly owned by foreigners. (M.A.N.'s Goal, *op. cit.*, Appendix B).

<sup>26</sup> Connected to this agreement is the Parity provision giving Americans equal rights as the Filipinos in the exploitation of natural resources and utilization of public utilities. The Philippine Constitution drafted in 1935 was amended to give way to this American demand.

<sup>27</sup> M.A.N.'s Goal, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

<sup>28</sup> This company was the first Filipino-owned oil corporation ever to be established in the Philippines.

<sup>29</sup> For the period 1950-1960 inclusive, foreign capital invested in the Philippines amounted only to \$19.2 million. During the same period, remittances abroad on earnings, profits and dividends by the same foreign firms amounted to the staggering sum of \$215.7 million. (From the *Philippine Chamber of Industries Policy Statement on Laurel-Langley Agreement*, 1965). Also, from 1967-1966 inclusive, the total American investments (net capital flow) in the Philippines amounted to \$92 million. During the same period, American investors gained a profit of some \$230 million

pino middle-class capitalists is retarded if not altogether suppressed. However, under the existing set-up, a different group of Filipinos is definitely being favored—the landlord-comprador class. The economic interests of people belonging to this group coincide with those of the foreigners. The import-export trade is too profitable to them that they tend to gloss over the fact that concentration on agricultural production alone will not bring about economic sufficiency. Under the terms of Laurel-Langley Agreement, for instance, it is this group that provides the Philippine quota on goods going to the US market. It goes without saying that this group is for the continued operation of the said agreement—another example of class bias and selfishness.

A colonial economy gives rise to a colonial form of government and system of politics. The *lagay*<sup>30</sup> and *padrino*<sup>31</sup> system in government offices and in practically all levels of the bureaucracy is one outstanding feature of this kind of politics. Money spent during elections are considered investments with sure returns of profit. Public office is no longer a public trust but a means to affluence and wealth. Indeed, some Filipino leaders had already imbibed this new system of values. This explains the rampant graft and corruption that pervade in Philippine government today.

On the other hand, the general public is not at all without knowledge of this social disease.<sup>32</sup> As a form of retaliation, they are forced to sell their votes to the highest bidder. Corruption is answered by corruption, demagoguery by applause, principles by the proddings of the stomach. Many of them are still under the spell of the myth of a two-party system.<sup>33</sup> This myth is being preserved by social critics through the mass media which are controlled or owned either by the local elite or foreigners.<sup>34</sup> Because of the influence of the mass media, people are somewhat immobilized. They do not know whom and how to direct their revenge. Some may single out the politicians, others the system and institutions. In the latter case, the end

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of which \$45 million is retained in the country while the remaining \$185 million is remitted abroad. (From *Survey of American Current Business*, compiled by the Center for Research & Communication.) See *The Sunday Times Magazine*, August 17, 1969, p. 11.

<sup>30</sup> *Lagay* is a Tagalog term which means "to put or give" something, money in general, in exchange for a *favor*. In many government offices and bureaus in the Philippines, *lagay* is held to be the stimulus that drives officials to work. Their duties and responsibilities are therefore not complete without a *lagay* from the people they are supposed to serve. *Lagay* is a special form of graft in the government.

<sup>31</sup> *Padrino* is a Spanish word which means nepotism or patronage.

<sup>32</sup> Paradoxically, graft and corruption in the government is an acknowledged fact in the Philippines. The public somehow have become immune to it that no one seriously takes it anymore as a topic of discussion. To many, it has become part and parcel of a "normal" process of politics.

<sup>33</sup> To date, there are two leading political parties in the Philippines—*Nacionalista* and *Liberal*. The two have no specific and definite program of government or ideology sufficient to distinguish one from the other. Consequently, political turncoatism is rampant both in local and national levels of politics.

<sup>34</sup> Three of the six leading Philippine newspapers are owned by two Filipino family corporations. The remaining three are owned by Americans and Spaniards.

result is the so-called "disrespect to the rule of law" which of course is nothing but a reflection of the people's impersonal vendetta. This outlook, together with the outrageous effects of starvation explains the decline of peace and order in the country today.

The colonial system of politics is reinforced and maintained by a colonial system of education. Indeed, the civilizing imprints of the American Thomasites are still legible today in the Philippines. Students, intellectuals and professionals—those who have the niceties of education have now become the modern *Basilios*, *Donya Victorinas*, and *Capitan Tiagos*.<sup>35</sup> They speak the language of the colonizers, acquire their values, taste and idiosyncracies. To date, Philippine society has in its midst caricatures of Westerners in an Eastern setting. And to prove their allegiance to the West, they form regular exodus to the "promised land." This, the Filipinos call, the brain-drain,<sup>36</sup> the export of Filipino talents.

To stave off the wrath of the suffering masses and guard foreign vested interests in the country, American military bases act as the faithful sentinel of the establishment. It is worth mentioning here some of the military agreements the Philippines entered into with the United States: the Military Bases Agreement of March 14, 1947,<sup>37</sup> The Mutual Defense Treaty of August 30, 1951 and the SEATO of September 8, 1954. All these were assumed to be for its protection and defense against threats of subversion. The Philippine defense program, however, is mainly designed to quell internal and not external threats simply because the latter does not exist. No less than President Marcos himself admitted this in a speech abroad in 1968 while touring Asia.

#### CONCLUSION

Thus, the prime responsibility of carrying on a meaningful social change rests solely on the people. They are the most important factor that will decide the future of the country. Today, the objective conditions for change are already present in the Philippines and cannot anymore be ignored. Only the subjective factor is needed. It is this "subjectivism" that will make the Filipino people understand the reality of their problems.

We do not deny the role of the ruling elite in bringing about social change. Indeed, we recognize their part in nation building. We maintain,

<sup>35</sup> Some of the leading characters in Jose Rizal's *Noli Me Tangere*. They portray the mentality of Filipinos during the Spanish period resulting from Spanish cultural influences. The analogy is carried on to present-day Filipinos with strong American cultural and mental outlook.

<sup>36</sup> The term is used to denote the flow of Filipino technicians, engineers, Doctors, Nurses, etc. to other countries particularly the US in order to seek high-paying employment.

<sup>37</sup> This agreement gives the United States rights to establish military bases in different parts of the country for a period of 99 years. Subsequent talks reduced the period "in principle" to 25 years. Presently, there are about half a dozen active American bases in the country.

however, that the change coming from them can only go up to a certain extent whereas those from the people is unlimited. Furthermore, we hold the view that the change from "above" cannot be taken as an act of charity. Under no illusion should the Filipino elite be that sharing their wealth with others is their Christian obligation. To paraphrase St. Ambrose "you (the rich) are not making a gift of your possessions to the poor . . . you are handing him what is his. For what has been given in common . . . you have arrogated to yourself." <sup>38</sup>

The poor, for their part must assert their rights and their historic mission to change society. Some will not like it of course. "Rich people" says Dostoyevsky "don't like the poor to complain aloud, they disturb them, they are troublesome! Yes poverty is always troublesome." <sup>39</sup>

Finally, the social problems in the Philippines today are not the creation only of the rich. They themselves may not even know why the affluence of a few exists along with the poverty of many. The answer to this paradox cannot be found in the minds of all but in the character of the social system itself. The system is still a mystery to many. Its laws are yet to be cognized. But someday, many will.

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<sup>38</sup> Pope Paul VI, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

<sup>39</sup> Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Poor People, etc.* (New York: Dell Publishing Company Inc., 1960).