

BOLSHEVISM IN THE COLONIES INDOCHINA AND THE "PHILIPPINE EXAMPLE"

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Tolerated in the capitalist countries of the West, communism was regarded by the colonial authorities as a dangerous doctrine in their under-developed, agrarian-based colonies. It did not take long for communist parties in Indochina and the Philippines, both formally founded within months of each other in 1930, to be subjected to repression and/or declared illegal. Subsequent periods of relative benignity on the part of the French and the American colonial authorities, notably during the anti-fascist Popular Front and later during World War II, never meant the definite elimination of the threat which the new ideology represented for the ruling classes of the "mother countries" and their local counterparts in Southeast Asia.

This threat was magnified by a certain perception of communism as an international conspiracy of likeminded revolutionary parties obeying the directives of the Komintern. Capitalism's weakest links being then found in the colonies, the growing popularity of Marxist-Leninist theory and practice there did not fail to arouse the wariness of the colonialists. Gen. Charles Mangin, a veteran of the African campaigns, gave an early reading of the danger for the West: the "yellow" and "black" perils, he claimed, were negligible in comparison to the "red" Russian menace.¹ If France represented, for ex-Indochinese Governor-General Albert Sarraut, "the moral force most capable of resisting triumphantly the universal enterprise of national and social disintegration whence the leaders of Muscovite communism hope to launch their new imperialism,"² her colonial empire was being put to the test by internal and external stresses for which mere moral force provided an inadequate response. Indochina—"the most important, the most developed and the most prosperous of our colonies," in Sarraut's enthusiastic words³—began showing unmistakable symptoms of the Bolshevik virus in the 1920s. So did the nearby American island colony, the Philippines. French authorities concluded, quite rightly, that this simultaneous manifestation of similar symp-

¹ *New York Times*, 23 October 1921, in Thomas Ennis, *French Policy and Developments in Indochina* (Chicago, 1936), p. 177n.

² Speech at Constantine, 23 April 1927, quoted in Raoul Girardet, *L'idée coloniale en France de 1871 à 1962* (Paris, 1972), p. 223.

³ Albert Sarraut, *La Mise en Valeur des Colonies Françaises* (Paris, 1923), p. 463.

toms was no simple coincidence; but as this study will show, they grossly over-estimated the supposed "Philippine example" in the "contamination" of Indochina. That this exaggerated view eventually paved the way for the French authorities' mishandling of its Indochinese problem is not a farfetched conclusion.

This study of French bureaucrats' fascination with the Philippine case and the "contamination" theory during the colonial era is based mainly on declassified consular and intelligence reports on file at the overseas section of the National Archives in Paris.⁴ Needless to say, there are limits to these reports' accuracy. Their veracity, however, is beside the point. The value of these documents lies in their insight into the colonial order's visceral hostility to Bolshevism and all other ideas, including bourgeois nationalism, susceptible of weakening the French position in Indochina. Given this extreme rigidity, it is not surprising to find that the French were prone to alternately magnify the Bolshevik menace (for purposes of "exposing" its multiform activities), or belittle its influence (for purposes of reassuring Paris when it was too late to deny its tenacious existence). In any event, the bureaucratic limitations inherent in the job of reporting on the "enemy" are made explicit in a dispatch, circa 1931, sent by the acting consul in Manila to the Indochina Governor General. In the course of a detailed analysis of the PKP's activities, Consul Peyronnet (1) complained of the consulate's lack of a translator for the Spanish and especially the Tagalog press, which had better coverage of the provinces; (2) criticized the "more or less fallacious" reports emanating from the Constabulary, which was "eager to boost its image"—therefore "it is difficult to know the truth"; and (3) revealed that he had procured information, and was hoping for more, from the U.S. Army intelligence service.⁵ Now, the other reports consulted in this study show that Peyronnet was not alone among his French colleagues in obtaining basic data from the local English-language press (e.g., the *Manila Times*, the *Philippines Herald* and the *Philippine Free Press*), or in relying on American informants for more "specialized" information.

This is not to say that official or semi-official reporting on the new American colony consistently lacked an independent analysis of

⁴ Located at 27 rue Oudinot, Paris 75007. Dossiers about Philippine revolutionary movements may be found under the following headings: Indochine Nouveau Fonds 110, 118, 188, 561, 1041; Asie Orientale 32, 46; Affaires Politiques 82, 110, 365, 366, 367, 2109, 2415, 2416; and SLOTFOM Series VIII. For brevity's sake, these headings are omitted in the subsequent footnotes.

⁵ Peyronnet, *gérant* of the French Consulate in Manila, to the Indochinese Governor-General, confidential. There is no date, but from the context it appears to have been written in early 1931. Peyronnet occupied his post for less than a year, after Antoine Valentini (Jan. 1921-April 1930) and before Gaston Willouquet (Feb. 1931-Jan. 1941).

contemporary developments. Quite the contrary: notably where the American presence in the Philippines was concerned, the French manifested a highly critical, not to say supercilious, attitude which led them, for example, to lump Spanish obscurantism and American aggressiveness in the same conqueror's camp.⁶ But French disapproval of U.S. policy in the Philippines, and the contradictions stemming from American's post-World War I encroachment on the French colonial preserve of Indochina, gave way to the objective convergence of Franco-American strategic interests in Southeast Asia. In due time, this convergence of interests led to a grudging admission on the part of French officials that the international anti-communist alliance necessitated American hegemony in Southeast Asia—were it at the price of French withdrawal from Indochina.

Repercussions of the separatist movement on Indochina.—At least two decades before the propagation of communist ideas in the Southeast Asian countries, French authorities were already attuned to the inter-regional repercussions of national independence movements. Anti-Spanish agitation in the Philippines in the late 19th century evoked apprehension among the French, jealous of their control over the newly-acquired Indochinese territories of Tonkin, Annam, Cochinchina, Laos, and Cambodia. In 1896 the French ambassador thus called the attention of his ministry to the contagion that would probably spread to Indochina from the "separatist" movement he perceived to be gaining ground in the Spanish colony. The dispatch concluded with a warning:

It seems to me that henceforth there are reasons to closely watch the state of mind in Luzon, for our situation in the Far East and the proximity of the Philippines with our Indochinese empire do not allow us to remain indifferent.⁷

The analogy of the two neighboring colonies' past, present and future evolution made the Philippines an extremely interesting country for the French to observe.⁸ The ambassador to the U.S. was thus requested by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to report on the "backlash" of Philippine independence on Annam.⁹ Ratification of the Jones Bill in 1916, which would grant eventual autonomy to the archipelago,

⁶ Charles Garnier, "Les Américains aux Philippines". *Bulletin de la Société Normande de Géographie* (Jan.-March 1902), p. 94. Garnier, an *agrégé* and professor, spent a month in Manila in the summer of 1900.

⁷ Marquis de Reverseaux, French Ambassador, to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (henceforth abbreviated as MAE), Madrid, 25 April 1896.

⁸ Consul-General of France to MAE, New York, 25 September 1921. Earlier, the deputy for Cochinchina Ernest Outrey had visited Manila in 1917 to look into the repercussions of the American experiment in the Philippines; Outrey complained, however, that all foreign powers, except France, were represented by officers above vice-consul level. "Notes sur les Philippines", 25-page typewritten report to the President of the Commission for External and Colonial Affairs (15 February 1918), p. 19.

⁹ French Ambassador to the U.S. to MAE, Wash., D.C., 25 June 1921.

spurred Vice Consul Maurice Paillard in Manila to wonder: would the U.S. government be setting a precedent in arousing "separatist or emancipatory ideas" among "neighboring Asian peoples under Western domination"? Paillard answered his own question in the negative, for "the traditionalism of our Indochinese protégés makes them very different from the Filipinos." However, he added, the Philippine example could still be exploited by Annamite agitators or even by "certain aliens" living in Indochina.¹⁰ As subsequent reports were to show, the allusion was to the overseas Chinese.

There is a pronounced alarmist tone in Paillard's earlier report denouncing the founding of the Sociedad Oriental in Manila in May 1915. One of the Sociedad's aims was "mutual understanding among Far Eastern countries," the latter defined in its statutes as consisting of China, Japan, Indochina, Siam, Java, Sumatra, the Straits Settlements, the Confederated Malay States, Borneo, Celebes and the Philippines. The Sociedad's implicit long-term objective of an "Asia for the Asians" prompted the vice-consul to comment that

Our Annamite subjects and protégés have appeared, these past few years, to lend a rather attentive ear to noises from the outside, and if the Sociedad Oriental's propaganda reaches them, it is perhaps to be feared that they will attribute to it an importance and a significance which can only lead to error.¹¹

As Paillard was well aware, Japan was the moving spirit of the new organization.¹² Fears of Japanese expansionism exacerbated French jealousy for its colonies, and those of other Western countries, in Southeast Asia. Japan's malevolent intentions, in fact, were invoked as a pretext to retain the levers of French colonial empire.

An independent Philippines would mean, in the short run, a complete anarchy apt to lead to a more or less prolonged Japanese intervention followed by a Japanese occupation; the threat for Indochina would thus become very close.¹³

Harrison's provocation.—Especially when they came from the Americans, manifestations of sentiments favorable to Philippine independence took on the character of a provocation for the French. Governor-General F. B. Harrison precisely touched on a sensitive spot in the French ego when he reminded his audience in a farewell speech that

¹⁰ Vice-Consul Paillard to MAE, Manila, 6 Sept. 1916.

¹¹ Paillard to MAE, Manila, 14 May 1915.

¹² The SO-Japanese connection is evoked by Grant K. Goodman, "The Problem of Philippine Independence and Japan; The First Three Decades of American Colonial Rule," *Southeast Asia* (Southern Illinois University), Summer 1971, p. 175.

¹³ Consul-General of France in New York to MAE, 25 Sept. 1921.

The question of Philippine independence is much wider than the bounds of these islands. It reaches out to half of the human race. Do not forget that your successes here are watched by *millions of men, your neighbors*, for whom these successes and your ideal are equally their own.¹⁴

Consul Antoine Valentini's commentary on Harrison's inflammatory remarks is worth quoting at length, for the insight it provides into the wishful thinking and above all the anxiety that would continue to haunt French colonials until the final disintegration of their Indochinese empire:

...there is no mistaking the repercussion and the inevitable consequences which the granting of independence to the Philippines would have in Asia. All minds which are in the least enlightened are aware of this... [The Americans and other foreigners present] showed the greatest coldness and remained silent on this occasion. In [their] opinion, Mr. Harrison's policy has been rather pernicious, if not from the domestic point of view, at the very least insofar as the unfortunate example given to the outside world is concerned.¹⁵

On the other hand, prominent Filipinos' second thoughts about independence were approvingly cited for Paris' consideration. One such personality was Trinidad Pardo de Tavera, described as pro-French in his sympathies, "a man of common sense, well-informed, judging the situation with impartiality," who expressed to Valentini his fear that in the present circumstances "the Philippines, left to herself, would become another Mexico."¹⁶

Nationalism and its anti-communist potential.—If separatism was anathema to the French "Philippine watchers," nationalism was no less an object of apprehension. Especially when the Bolshevik message was beginning to find favorable responses in the colonies, the imperialist reflexes of the French authorities led them to suspect nationalism as a simple disguise for the greater enemy: communism. A report from the Indochinese government-general took note in 1928 of the common aspirations binding the Filipino and Chinese peoples to each other and termed this development "understandable," but added that

it is unfortunately to be feared that the phase of nationalist action in the archipelago as in China be preceded, accompanied or followed by communist agitation, much more dangerous.

¹⁴ Emphasis supplied; retranslated from the French. This underlined passage was written in capital letters in the report of Consul Antoine Valentini to MAE, Manila, 7 March 1921.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Valentini to MAE, Manila, 31 Jan. 1921. Pardo de Tavera's allusion was to the major upheaval that occurred in the ex-Spanish colony starting 1910.

This warning was reinforced by the observation that "limited to national demands alone, agitation in the Philippines would not offer a great danger".¹⁷ The report identified the "first symptoms" of this phenomenon, similar to others previously observed in Canton, Shanghai and Hankow: Soviet intervention through international workers' congresses; the use of trade unions, and the attempt to "conjugate nationalism with communism, with the thirst for independence necessitating the acceptance of funds and directives from Moscow."¹⁸

The following year, a split perceived within the Congreso Obrero inspired the foreign affairs section of the Indochinese government-general to urge:

One must surely begin to take advantage of the current disagreement by definitively isolating the extremist agitators from the elements which have remained relatively healthy in that they seek a *national* solution to a properly *national* problem.¹⁹

This recognition of the anti-communist potential of bourgeois nationalism is an isolated case in the documents under study. Moreover, the possibility of harnessing indigenous politicians' aspirations to offer an alternative to more radical elements was denied by contemporary French policy in Indochina. French intransigence in the direct colony of Cochinchina thwarted the elitist Constitutionalist Party's objective of coopting communist demands for freedom. For all their good intentions, the constitutionalists' clamor for a share of political power did not sit well with the French authorities, whose unshakable conviction in the efficacy of direct rule plus military strength eventually played into the hands of the Vietnamese communists.²⁰

The Chinese in Southeast Asia.—As we have seen, the French assumed that the Chinese revolution would also affect political events in both the Philippines and Indochina. As early as 1898, French authorities were already anticipating potential Chinese subversion in the Far East. That year, the opening of a Chinese consulate in Manila was reported as a matter of routine by the local French consul, but with the warning that the Chinese might try to set up similar posts

¹⁷ *Note sur l'action des colonies chinoises aux Iles philippines*, pub. by the Government-General of Indochina, Foreign Affairs Service (Hanoi, 31 July 1928, pp. 6-7).

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Emphasis supplied. *Note sur la situation politique aux Iles philippines (Année 1929)*, pub. by the Governor-General of Indochina (Hanoi, 14 Dec. 1929), p. 15. The split originated from the alleged demand of Domingo Ponce, one of the Congreso's leaders, that the CO break away from the Shanghai-based Pan-Pacific Trade Union Secretariat on the grounds that "Filipino workers must first resolve the national problems concerning them before helping foreign workers' organizations in their demands."

²⁰ A detailed study of the Constitutionalist Party's dilemma is the monograph of Megan Cook, *The Constitutionalist Party in Cochinchina: The Years of Decline, 1930-1942*, Monash Papers on Southeast Asia, No. 6 (1977).

in Saigon, Hanoi and Haiphong, thus paving the way for future subversion.²¹

Bolshevism was adding greater urgency to the "Chinese peril". In 1928, the Indochinese government-general admitted that Chinese immigrants in the Philippines posed no security problems, but stated that it would be in the Filipinos' interest not to grant "too great facilities" to these aliens, for economic and political reasons.²² Numerous clandestine arrivals of Chinese nationals allegedly facilitated the entry of "radical emissaries" from Canton and "other centers of disorder" in southern China.²³ The visit to Manila of the Indochinese governor-general gave him the opportunity to report that Philippine officials distrusted these immigrants for a variety of reasons, but above all for the "communist agitation" being allegedly carried out by numerous Chinese residents.²⁴

Sinophobia intensified in 1928 with the founding of the Singapore-based Nan Yang communist party and the imminent organization of a Philippine one. Speculation about possible Chinese involvement in the party being formed in the American colony was shared by French intelligence agents, alerted to Chinese communists' activities everywhere.

An intelligence dispatch sought to prove that Lenin, no less, intended to use the Chinese workers in France for the propagation of Bolshevism.²⁵ Chinese workers in the Paris region were closely watched, their meetings infiltrated and mail intercepted.²⁶ In the French lease territory of Kwang Chow-wan (Kwangtung province), tight security measures were enforced on the entry or stay of "aliens" from Indochina, and on their exercise of certain strategic trades or occupations (e.g., painters; customs, intelligence, immigration and emigration agents; weapons or ammunitions dealers; makers and dealers of private radio sets or their spare parts).²⁷ Many Chinese nationals were

²¹ Consul G. Bérard to MAE, Manila, 23 Sept. 1898.

²² *Note sur la situation politique* (1928), op. cit., pp. 27-28.

²³ Ministre de Martel to MAE, Peking, 31 December 1927.

²⁴ Report of Pasquier to the Minister of Colonies, Hanoi, 11 Feb. 1932, pp. 11-12.

²⁵ "De l'utilisation des Chinois en France pour la propagande bolchévique", in *Bulletin mensuel* No. 4 (1 July 1922), p. 12. This monthly bulletin, with irregular dating after the first few issues, was published by the Ministry of Colonies, Political Affairs Direction, First Bureau.

²⁶ Records of police surveillance and expulsion of suspects may be found in the "dossiers chinois" of the main National Archives (44 rue des Francs Bourgeois, Paris 75004), viz. boxes F7 12900 and 12901.

²⁷ "Décret réglementant les conditions d'admission des Français et étrangers en Indochine", dated 31 August 1933, in *Bulletin Officiel des Colonies*, 1933, pp. 1217-1230.

in fact expelled from the territory in the latter half of the 1930s, presumably for security reasons.²⁸

More than 400 Chinese nationals suspected of having links with the Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas (PKP) were expelled to Hong-kong in April 1931; the French consul expressed the hope that these "undesirables" be denied subsequent entry to Indochina.²⁹ Governor-General Pierre Pasquier assured the Ministry of Colonies that "useful dispositions" had indeed been taken in this regard. Intercolonial co-operation against Bolshevism was well on its way to becoming a reality.

Bolshevism as an international menace for France.—The first official document that explicitly identifies communism as an international menace for France, and calling for coordinated political-military action against it, is a "Note on Bolshevism in the Far East" written by the military attaché in Peking and dated 15 December 1920.³⁰ This secret document claimed that the Soviet Union's main objective in Asia was Japan, followed by the French and the British colonies. These colonies, it was alleged, would fall to the USSR through southern China's "political cooperation" and through "social propaganda" among the intelligentsia of Southeast Asia. The region was singled out by the attaché as being particularly favorable for Bolshevik propaganda because it had already been exposed for the past 20 years to "advanced ideas". These, however, were "most often misunderstood, maladapted to the Asians' needs."³¹

Southeast Asia in particular as a Soviet target is the object of another secret document, a bulletin published by the Ministry of Colonies' political affairs section.³² Not without some pride, the author traced the ideas of the Bolsheviks to those of the French Revolution:

It does not extend its hand to the proletarian classes alone, but also claims to liberate the oppressed, the disinherited... and not [just] individuals belonging to a determined social class.³³

Through manipulation of these libertarian concepts, the bulletin continued, Bolshevism could pursue the double objective of weakening its enemies and spreading its international influence through

²⁸ The names of Chinese (as well as Indochinese) nationals expelled from Kwang Chow-wan during this period are found in several issues of the *Journal Officiel de l'Indochine Française*.

²⁹ Consul Gaston Willoquet to MAE, 2 May 1931.

³⁰ *Note sur le Bolchévisme en Extrême-Orient*, by Chef de Bataillon Tambrun, military attaché of the French Legation (Peking, 15 December 1920).

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

³² "Note sur la propagande bolchévique aux colonies" in *Bulletin mensuel* No. 1 (19 April 1922).

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

“ethnic groups won over to its principles”.³⁴ A strong belief in the superiority of French civilization, however, assuaged French anxieties over the looming Bolshevik challenge. “French individualism, refined by 20 centuries of spiritualism, is the living antithesis” of the Soviet regime, as the consul in Manila pointed out.³⁵

French view of the PKP's development. — Two months after it identified Southeast Asia as a target for Soviet designs, the *Bulletin mensuel* carried the first mention of the Philippines. The French communist party newspaper *L'Humanité* was quoted as having claimed that revolutionary propaganda was making headway in Indochina, and recommending that isolated elements group together and link up with workers' movements in neighboring countries, notably in Singapore, Hongkong and Manila.³⁶

There follows a six-year gap in the documents' narrative of the progress of Philippine communism. The apparent reason is that the French diplomats or agents in Manila, Hanoi, Washington or elsewhere saw nothing significant to report during those relatively peaceful years before the PKP's founding. The same may be said of American officials in Manila: according to an American scholar-specialist on Asian communism, until 1930 the annual reports of the U.S. governor-general showed little concern with a communist problem in the islands.³⁷ But from 1928 on, the French reports increase in quantity, if not in quality. Representative excerpts from these documents are revealing both for the “information” they convey and for the insecurity that consistently underlies even the sarcastic or patronizing tone that occasionally emerges.

In March 1928, French agents noted the presence of a Filipino identified as Dantes at the international trade union congress held in Moscow that month. Together with a black American delegate named Ford, Dantes spoke on working conditions “under the yoke of the American boss”. These two delegates' presence in the Soviet capital drew the following comment:

The participation of colonials and semi-colonials in the conference is, after all, without importance: in Moscow they like to trot

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Willoquet to MAE, 1 July 1932.

³⁶ “Note sur la propagande révolutionnaire intéressant les pays d'outre-mer” in *Bulletin mensuel* No. 3 (June 1922), p. 16. I have not been able to check either the veracity or the date of the *Humanité* report. Note that the French intelligence bulletin's mention of the Philippines comes a full year before that of a Profintern “Resolution on Work in the Far and Near East”, which recognized the archipelago as “an important strategic point in the Pacific Ocean”: *Inprecor*, 6 October 1923, in Charles McLane, *Soviet Strategies in Southeast Asia: An Exploration of Eastern Policy Under Lenin and Stalin* (Princeton University Press, 1966), p. 113.

³⁷ McLane, *ibid.*, p. 114.

out... exotic "extras", with the role of convincing the Russian proletariat of the international influence of Bolshevism.³⁸

The following year, a review of political activities in the U.S. colony reaffirmed the red peril. The Indochinese government-general observed, in the Philippines, "the growth of a workers' movement which is taking on considerable importance, and whose undoubted communist links render it particularly dangerous for the prosperity and even the security of the archipelago". This movement, the author claimed, was born out of workers' anxiety over the mechanization of most local handicraft (i.e., non-mechanized) industries. As proof of its communist tendencies, Point 7 of the Congreso Obrero's programme was cited: "Support for the Chinese worker-peasant evolution and defense of the USSR".³⁹

The thirties ushered in a wave of social unrest in the Southeast Asian colonies, and with it a wealth of material to bring to the attention of Paris. A strike at the Philippine Sheet Metal Company in March sounded the alarm for the decade to come:

The workers of this enterprise were hitherto satisfied with their lot and it is only during the past few months that their attitude has been transformed, this change having taken place as soon as communist propaganda infiltrated their ranks.⁴⁰

"Communist manipulators" were held responsible for a high school students' boycott in protest against anti-Filipino remarks uttered by an American teacher.⁴¹ The monthly bulletin devoted to "Bolshevik propaganda in the colonies" identified two other organizations as Communist: the Congreso Proletario de Filipinas (made up of ex-Congreso Obrero militants) and the Philippine-Chinese Labor General Association. Leaders of these two organizations, the bulletin averred, had made trips to Shanghai, Vladivostok, France and Germany to link up with the communist parties of those countries.⁴²

A report dated 17 November 1930 is of particular interest because of two items: firstly, local press accounts were cited which imputed Bolshevik ideas to student unrest in Laguna province; secondly, a meeting held by "a local socialist organization" on 8 Nov-

³⁸ "L'action du secrétariat pan-pacifique des trade unions" in *Bulletin mensuel* (31 Oct. 1928), pp. 23-24.

³⁹ *Note sur la situation politique* (1929), *op. cit.*, p. 12.

⁴⁰ Consul A. Valentini to MAE, Manila, 26 March 1930.

⁴¹ "Les organisations communistes aux Philippines" in *Bulletin mensuel* (31 October 1930), p. 22.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 21. The same information is conveyed by Consul Valentini to the Governor-General of Indochina (10 February 1930), in response to the latter's confidential request for a briefing on Philippine political movements. However, no evidence is presented in either document to establish Philippine linkages with the French or German parties.

ember 1930 (and not 7 November, as the consul erroneously stated), was the occasion for "speeches marked by the purest Bolshevism".

It is difficult to know what occasion is marked by this meeting; it is thought (to be) in commemoration of an important event in Soviet Russia, either the death or the birth of Lenin, or the founding of the Soviet Republic dating 13 November 1918.⁴³

The event, of course, was the founding of the PKP, which had already been anticipated by the French in Indochina in 1929.⁴⁴

The Tayug rebellion in January 1931 struck the new consul, Gaston Willoquet, as having "a great analogy" with the Yen Bay uprising of February 1930 in Tonkin.⁴⁵ In his report about the Tayug incident to the Minister of Colonies, Indochinese Governor-General René Robin did not fail to mention Moscow's alleged role as instigator.⁴⁶

In 1931, the PKP was outlawed after a violent demonstration in Manila. In spite of his prediction that the new hard-line policy of the U.S. colonial regime would lead to the party's decline, Willoquet was forced to admit, three months later, that communism was still on the rise — but that it was not going to bring about significant changes "in this country where only cockfights succeed in exciting passions. Communism itself, as it descends towards the equator, no longer has the same face."⁴⁷

French disapproval of U.S. "leniency". — Whereas in the early 1920s French criticism of U.S. policy in the Philippines focused on American officials' rash promises of independence, reports to Paris in the following decade harped on what was perceived, rightly or wrongly, to be signs of American leniency towards the PKP. Thus Willoquet approved of the PKP's proscription, which marked "a complete turnabout in the policy . . . characterized by an exaggerated respect for constitutional principles".⁴⁸ The outlawed party held its congress on 27-30 June 1932; that it took place at all, and that the congress delegates were not molested by the police as they visited government offices where they delivered "subversive speeches" before the personnel constituted proof, where Willoquet was concerned, of laxity on the part of the Americans, unable or unwilling to "take energetic measures that may extirpate the evil at its root".⁴⁹

⁴³ Peyronnet to MAE, Manila, 17 November 1930.

⁴⁴ *Note sur l'action des colonies chinoises*, op. cit., p. 8.

⁴⁵ Willoquet to MAE, Manila, 5 May 1931.

⁴⁶ Robin to the Minister of Colonies, Hanoi, 28 May 1931.

⁴⁷ Willoquet to MAE, Manila, 15 June 1931.

⁴⁸ Willoquet to MAE, Manila, 14 March 1931.

⁴⁹ Willoquet to MAE, Manila, 5 October 1932.

Analyzing the American regime's apparent tolerance towards the PKP, Willoquet could only conclude that an agreement had been reached between Moscow and Washington.⁵⁰ The consul offered four reasons in support of his theory:

- 1) affinities between the Russian and American peoples, and strong sympathy after Alaska was ceded to the U.S.;
- 2) reinforcement of this sympathy by certain Slavic traits which, in turn, were abetted by the advent of communism: "the same taste for the grandiose and the standard (sic), the same spirit of brutal will power, the same thirst for material pleasures, the same worship of the machine, and finally, "this promiscuity of bodies and souls characteristic of the Soviet regime" which, being equally the basis of U.S. society, predisposed Americans to indulgent understanding towards the USSR;
- 3) existence of a common enemy (apparently referring to Japan);
- 4) American capitalists' plan for a "new economic world" in the Pacific which would encompass the Soviet Union and "bolshevized China", with the U.S. as leaders and promoters.⁵¹

Willoquet further reported that among the American community in Manila he often heard expressed the opinion that well-intentioned cooperation was still the best way of "embourgeoisizing the Soviets".⁵² In view of the alleged U.S.-Soviet collusion, the consul felt duty-bound to register his doubts about the Americans' "spirit of solidarity" and darkly alluded to the threat which their leniency posed to "the community of interests of the white race in the Pacific".⁵³ The new situation in the Philippines, Willoquet predicted, would provide an opportunity for Indochinese, Javanese and Chinese agitators to launch their reprehensible activities.⁵⁴

Explanations for communist popularity. — After its banning in 1931, the PKP not only continued to mobilize the worker and peasant masses, but even gained more ground throughout Luzon and the Visayas, particularly in the countryside. The French were not hard put to find reasons for this phenomenal upsurge. American tolerance, as we have seen, was for the French an important factor. "Peasant gullibility", as in Indochina, was advanced as another reason.⁵⁵ Other official French analyses, which apparently derived in part from U.S. military intelligence reports, identified four others:

⁵⁰ Willoquet to MAE, Manila, 1 July 1932. However, the consul added that "this is only an impression without a precise basis; the surveys I have undertaken on the subject in official circles and on the communist side have not yet yielded any result."

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 7 and 9.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁵⁵ Governor-General of Indochina to the Minister of Colonies, Hanoi, 1 April 1931.

the *kasama* system: "the main communist idea being the equal redistribution of land among all men, all these workers are ready, therefore, to rally to Moscow's ideas";

distance from Manila: "In provinces far from the central government like Cebu and Iloilo, all communist or revolutionary influence may more readily find partisans;"

Filipinos' corruptibility: "One must not forget that after a long Spanish occupation, all Filipinos, whoever they may be, can be bought, and the present American government knows it very well";

secret societies: "these... appeal to ignorant people and nationalist sentiment may easily change to revolutionary sentiment".⁵⁶

Filipino intellectuals also came in for their share of the blame, in the French view.

We are not here in a country sufficiently developed socially and morally—supposing that it is intellectually so—to expose it with impunity to the corrosion of communist theories. The middle class—main factor of the stability of States—is practically inexistent in the Philippines and the agrarian problem is posed here in all its acuteness. The congenital apathy of the Malay, his spirit of kinship, may *à la rigueur* be invoked as factors contrary to communism but they do not counterbalance, far from it, the danger which is represented by the rising tide of the intellectual proletariat thrown every year upon the pavement of Manila by the American universities.⁵⁷

French desire to commit the U.S. — Towards their American counterparts, French bureaucrats were eager to give assurances of their country's cooperation in matters affecting their supposed mutual interests as colonial powers in Southeast Asia. For example, Consul Valentini reassured Governor-General Leonard Wood that Paris maintained "the greatest reservation" about Philippine independence, and that French support would not be extended to the campaign for greater freedom from the U.S. Valentini belied the rumor, circulating in Manila, to the effect that the Parti Radical and certain government officials in Paris had encouraged Manuel Quezon and Sergio Osmeña during their visit to France in September 1924. The consul was pleased to report to his ministry that Wood believed his explanation, and that the latter reminded him of the "dangerous repercussion in your rich and prosperous Indochinese colony" which eventual independence for the Philippines would set off.⁵⁸

Where the possibility of engaging the U.S. in a Southeast Asian colonial alliance against communism was concerned, the French were

⁵⁶ Peyronnet to the Governor-General of Indochina, n.d. (see fn. 5). The French obsession with secret societies was nothing novel: in a 1928 report, these were indicated as possible conduits for communist ideas which the masses had not previously received with favor. *Note sur la situation politique* (1928), *op. cit.*, p. 3.

⁵⁷ Willoquet to MAE, 1 July 1932, p. 8.

⁵⁸ Valentini to MAE, 15, December 1924.

even more unequivocal. Governor-General Pierre Pasquier thus signalled French intentions to the Philippines' governor-general, during the latter's visit to Indo-china, in terms of shared responsibility.

Destiny has led us, in this part of the Far East, to assume responsibilities of the same nature towards the peoples whom we have the noble design of gradually drawing to ourselves. You will always find us disposed to harmonize our acts with yours, when it will come to fighting whosoever, from the exterior, will attempt to corrupt souls and trouble minds.⁵⁹

Governor-General Dwight Davis was apparently just as well-disposed to reciprocate Pasquier's offer; in the latter's account, Davis

spontaneously offered to send me, through our consul in Manila, documents about the communist agitation in the Philippines. I myself informed him very exactly about the activities of the Third International in Indochina and the energetic measures which we adopted to neutralize them.⁶⁰

Elsewhere, "close contact" between French and U.S. colonial intelligence services was confirmed by Consul Willoquet in a communication to his ministry.⁶¹

In the course of a talk in 1932 with Sir William Peel, governor-general of Hongkong, Pasquier learned that the British government had recently instructed Peel to cooperate with the Straits Settlements and Indochinese regimes in fighting communist propaganda and infiltration. (At this time, Nguyen Ai Quoc — later to be known as Ho Chi Minh — had just been expelled from Hongkong, but for some mysterious reason was not turned over to the French Sureté.)⁶² This British initiative may have inspired Pasquier to suggest a "discreet" conference, to be held in either Saigon or Hanoi, of police forces from Indochina, the Philippines, Siam, the Dutch East Indies, the Straits Settlements and Hongkong. But British reluctance prevented it from taking place.⁶³

Inter-imperialist contradictions. — The record of Franco-American relations in Southeast Asia during the colonial period does not warrant the conclusion that the French necessarily derived a sense of security from greater U.S. involvement in their strategic interests. The objective dynamics of American monopoly capitalism's drive to capture more markets on a global scale followed a logic of its own, which often ignored the wishful thinking of French officials. After

⁵⁹ Banquet speech by Pasquier, cited in Pasquier's report to the Minister of Colonies (Hanoi, 1 April 1931), No. 1008.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ Willoquet to MAE, Manila, 2 May 1931.

⁶² Jean Lacouture, *Ho Chi Minh* (Pelican Books ed., 1969), pp. 59-60.

⁶³ *La Dépeche d'Indochine*, 5 November 1934, in Daniel Hémerly, *Révolutionnaires Vietnamiens et Pouvoir Colonial en Indochine* (Paris, 1975), p. 160.

World War I, American traders and investors began to challenge French "rights" over Indochina, and French capitalists in that colony found it hard to resist American encroachment. Cochinchina senator Ernest Outrey made no secret of his wish to see American investment in the French colony, "which offers much more interesting economic possibilities than those presented by the Philippines".⁶⁴ For his part, Consul Maurice Paillard reported from Manila that during their visits to the Philippines, French businessmen from Indochina had developed an inordinate liking for American consumer goods, which were in fact already replacing French merchandise in Indochinese shops. Concerned with the psychological impact which this American invasion would have on the Indochinese, Paillard saw fit to remind Paris that "in the Asiatic regions, the moral influence of a nation is in a measure correlative with its economic situation in the country".⁶⁵

On the other hand, French capitalists in Indochina had no significant share in the Philippine market. Tonkinese coal, it was argued, should find an important outlet in the Philippines, the more so as Indochina was nearer the archipelago than the latter's two main suppliers: Japan and Australia.⁶⁶ The French commercial attaché for Indochina in the U.S. thus urged a reversal of the trend:

And why should we not also make Indochina a distribution center of French products for the whole Far East, just as our magnificent Along (sic) Bay coal deposits and our minerals of Tonkin should be the supply center of all the surrounding countries?⁶⁷

But American economic power retained its strong appeal in Indochina through the colonial period. In 1943, French businessmen in Hanoi confided to a visiting American officer that harsh restrictions against U.S. goods entering the colony were bad for the Indochinese economy.⁶⁸ According to still another American source, Ho Chi Minh himself said that while he was willing to give priority to French advisers, concessions and purchases of machinery and equipment for the postwar reconstruction his socialist republic, he felt that Indochina would be a "fertile field" for American capital and enterprise.⁶⁹ French intelligence reports after the war referred to American desires for a more liberal French policy with regard to the

⁶⁴ "Notes sur les Philippines", *op. cit.*, p. 14.

⁶⁵ Paillard to MAE, Manila, 6 April 1918.

⁶⁶ G. Giraud, "Le Régime Actuel aux Philippines: Les Enseignements à en Tirer", *La Dépêche Coloniale*, 29 January 1927.

⁶⁷ Robert Reyrieu, "Les Philippines", *La Dépêche Coloniale*, 1 June 1923.

⁶⁸ "Report of Arthur Hale of the USIS Based on a 13-Day Stay in Hanoi, October 1945", in Appendix I of *The U.S. and Vietnam, 1944-1947, A Staff Study Based on the Pentagon Papers* (Wash., D.C., 1972), p. 35.

⁶⁹ Memorandum from George Abbott, First Secretary of the U.S. Embassy in Paris, to Ambassador Caffery, 12 September 1946, quoted in Robert B.um, "Ho Chi Minh and the U.S.", *ibid.*, p. 13. Ho and Abbott were both in Paris at the time, negotiating with the French on separate matters.

entry of U.S. capital in Indochina, specially for cotton and coal. The corresponding dangers that these American incursions would entail, intelligence analysts pointed out, were U.S. control over the economy on the one hand, and possible U.S. support for anti-French elements in Indochina on the other.⁷⁰

Ho takes advantage of U.S.-French contradictions. — French mistrust of American motives had heightened in the war years with Franklin D. Roosevelt's celebrated plan to place Indochina under United Nations trusteeship. This project, which would have preempted the postwar French government's claim to regain Indochina as its sole master, sprang from a cherished American belief that the "prestigious" policy of the U.S. vis-à-vis its Filipino wards could successfully be replicated by other colonial powers.⁷¹ In fact, Roosevelt would have liked a Filipino representative appointed to the proposed trusteeship council, and even offered Filipino experts and advisers to Charles de Gaulle to help France establish a "more progressive policy" in Indochina.⁷²

Taking up the Americans on their word, Ho Chi Minh appealed on several occasions to the U.S. government from autumn 1945 to February 1946 for recognition of the infant Democratic Republic of Vietnam, or trusteeship under the U.N., or simple support at the U.N. for Vietnamese independence "Philippine style".⁷³ Ho told an agent of the Office of Strategic Services (forerunner of the CIA) that "I have always been impressed with your country's treatment of the Philippines. You kicked the Spanish out and let the Filipinos develop their own country."⁷⁴ American operatives in Hanoi in October 1945 had the pleasant surprise to note, "down to the smallest village", awareness of U.S. policy in the Philippines.⁷⁵

Ironically for the French, the pernicious "Philippine example" was bearing fruit in Vietnam, but in an unforeseen manner: instead of the communist virus, it was the American promise of decolonization that had caught. Ho Chi Minh probably never expected the U.S. to abide by its promise, and as a good Marxist-Leninist he had only seized on the tactical advantage offered by the Roosevelt plan in order to exert pressure on the French. But these speculations are

⁷⁰ Report of the Direction Générale des Etudes et Recherches, "Ingérences économiques américaines en Indochine au cours du deuxième semestre 1946", in *Notice Technique de l'Ingérence Economique* (9 January 1947), pp. 3, 17.

⁷¹ See Linda C. Robins, "Whatever Happened to the U.N. Trusteeship of Indochina?" *France-Asie*, No. 198, 3rd quarter 1969; also Bernard Fall, *The Two Vietnams* (New York, 1967), pp. 50-53.

⁷² Fall, *op. cit.*, pp. 52-53.

⁷³ *Pentagon Papers* (Gravel edition), Vol. I (Beacon Press, 1971), pp. 17-20.

⁷⁴ René Defourneaux as told to James Flowers, "A Secret Encounter With Ho Chi Minh", *Look*, 9 August 1966, p. 33.

⁷⁵ Hale, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

ultimately academic. After Roosevelt's death in April 1945 the trusteeship project was shelved (indeed, Roosevelt himself had begun to doubt its desirability); and U.S. policymakers came around to vindicating the French viewpoint: the good will of the Paris regime, held to be vital in American post-war policy vis-à-vis the USSR and Germany, was not to be jeopardized by inciting the Vietnamese to rebel against the French.⁷⁶

Meantime, the French foreign ministry in a review of U.S. policy in the Philippines until the outbreak of the war claimed to discern American tendencies to vacillate on the question of postwar independence. These alleged vacillations were cited to justify Paris' refusal to withdraw from Indochina:

What conclusions may aptly be drawn from these doubts, these hesitations, these gropings, these contradictions of the policy of a great country, usually sure of itself and of its destiny? It is that a colonial enterprise, even recent, is not liquidated, even if one wished, in a few years. Time is needed to educate a population ill prepared for independence. Even an economic association, though it be not older than a quarter of a century, cannot be broken promptly, unless it be to expose to a catastrophe the country which one has placed under one's tutelage and which one has the mission of guiding towards autonomy. The history of the American administration in the Philippines both confirms and illustrates this rule of general application.⁷⁷

Postwar: French acceptance of U.S. hegemony. — After the war, the U.S. pulled down its flag from Philippine soil — “to unanimous regret”, according to Willoquet's *Histoire des Philippines*⁷⁸ — yet did not lift a finger to prevent the French from reclaiming Indochina. But both Western countries still faced the postwar challenge of the communist movement, which in both Vietnam and the Philippines had survived the Japanese occupation. In fact, the DRV, the first socialist state in Southeast Asia, was proclaimed in September 1945 in the momentous conjuncture of Japanese surrender, Emperor Bao Dai's abdication, the effective absence of the French, and unchallenged superiority of the Viet Minh forces in the North. Conditions were not as favorable for the PKP and the Hukbalahap: the brutal repression unleashed by the U.S.-Roxas regime forced them to a continuous defensive, and factional differences — some dating from before the war — blunted whatever policy the PKP leadership had elaborated for the postwar era.

⁷⁶ David Halberstam, *The Making of a Quagmire* (New York, 1965), pp. 81-83.

⁷⁷ *Les Etats-Unis et les Philippines de 1898 à 1941*, MAE, Asia-Oceania Section, to the Minister of Colonies, 25 Jan. 1944, pp. 38-39.

⁷⁸ Gaston Willoquet, *Histoire des Philippines* (coll. Que Sais-Je?) (Paris, 1961), p. 75.

Needless to say, the new situation in both the Philippines and Indochina no longer warranted references to the contagion theory, if indeed it were justified at all. The French minister in Manila began to realize the weakness of the PKP, and to accept the *fait accompli* of 4 July 1946. Willoquet, reappointed to his post after the war, reacted positively to "majority politburo" leader Jorge Frianeza's assurances that the PKP — or at least his faction of the party's leadership, a difference which Willoquet apparently was not aware of — was not planning a violent revolution that would result in a socialist regime, and that the party was in fact in favor of wider development of capitalism in the Philippines.⁷⁹

The moderation (of Frianeza) is not surprising: it corresponds to a general slogan whose manifestations have been noted in many countries. In the Philippines the maneuver appears to be very clever... While it does not constitute a disavowal of the Huk uprising, it clearly indicates the inauguration of a new policy.⁸⁰

However, Willoquet opined that with popular support for the U.S.-Roxas reconstruction and industrialization program, PKP propaganda was "falling into a void".⁸¹

Tighter American control over the ex-colony, according to Willoquet, could only encourage Philippine development.⁸² U.S. bases in the archipelago were perceived as useful and indeed necessary attributes of American international hegemony, in a secret study made by the defense staff of the Gaullist regime. Communism once again provided the pretext for this military presence, with a crucial difference: the French military, at least, now conceded the primary role of U.S. power in containing communism in Asia.

Recent developments in international politics, very particularly the progress of communism and of pan-Islamism, prove overabundantly that if America wishes to play the role assigned to her in the plan of peaceful organization of the world, she must in all necessity have military, economic, political and even ideological bases on the entire surface of the globe.⁸³

The Philippine archipelago was described as a "choice position" for American military bases, for it lay within aircraft's reach of that part of Asia "most subject to fermentations of all sorts", i.e. East

⁷⁹ Willoquet to MAE, Manila, 15 Feb. 1947. See also Frianeza's "In Defense of the Communists", *Philippines Free Press*, 16 Aug. 1947, for more details on his faction's postwar policy.

⁸⁰ Willoquet, *ibid.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² Willoquet to MAE, Manila, 16 May 1947.

⁸³ Emphasis in text; "La situation des Américains dans la république indépendante des Philippines", *Bulletin d'Etudes* No. 43. Published by the Présidence du Gouvernement Provisoire de la République Française, Etat Major de la Défense Nationale, 2nd section (Paris, 23 Oct. 1946), p. 2.

Asia and Indochina.⁸⁴ The report concluded that "the U.S. knows how to unite a liberal policy with a strong guarantee of its military interests", and that the Philippines could be held up as an example to "the most intransigent nationalists of our overseas territories".⁸⁵

As this last passage shows, the French phobia for nationalism died hard. It led Willoquet, for instance, to indulge in the luxury of counselling his "old friend", the diplomat-general Carlos P. Romulo, to guard against

any rash enthusiasm in the role he has arrogated for himself, [that of] spokesman of the self-styled oppressed peoples. Before reaching the degree of advancement of the Filipinos, most Asian peoples still have a long evolution to undergo and it would not be doing them a favor to launch them in the great adventure and to precipitately grant them an independence which would rapidly be translated...into anarchy and misery.⁸⁶

Conclusion. — It remains to be definitively proven whether these consular and intelligence analyses, commentaries and progress reports on the Philippine communist movement influenced French policy for Indochina in any way. But it may be posited that the myopia of the "Philippine watchers", who were only too willing to exaggerate the proto-communist and communist "example" in the archipelago, was matched by the failure of their compatriots in charge of Vietnamese policy to adequately gauge the ideological, political and military strength of the Vietnamese communists. In their preoccupation with the proximity of and the apparent analogy between the Philippines and Vietnam, the French officials were seduced into regarding revolution as an exportable commodity; and worse, that the revolution would spread from the American colony to the French one. This facile conceptualization did not take into account certain barriers between the two colonized peoples.

A more judicious estimate of the Philippine communists' potential for inter-colonial contamination is afforded by data, testimonies of circumstantial evidence that have since then become available. Direct or indirect links between Indochinese and Philippine communists were inexistent: information about the activities of the various Comintern agents for Southeast Asia, viz. Ho Chi Minh, Tan Malaka and Hendrik Sneevliet, does not suggest the least coordination of

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁸⁶ Willoquet to MAE, Manila, 26 Feb. 1947. Needless to say, Willoquet's words of advice were given to Romulo when the Philippine republic was already formally independent and sovereign. However, Willoquet still believed as late as 1961 that the Philippines had no foreign policy of its own: "America has continued to govern the Philippines and to direct its foreign policy as if it were a protectorate." *Histoire, op. cit.* p. 114.

revolutionary movements between the two colonies.⁸⁷ While Ho Chi Minh had some rudimentary notions about the Philippines under U.S. rule, he himself never visited the country.

No contacts between ICP and PKP leaders or cadres seem to have taken place during this period, either bilaterally or in the course of the various congresses attended by Asian revolutionaries.⁸⁸ Vietnamese militants were not informed about developments taking place in the Philippines⁸⁹: a content analysis of *La Lutte*, the revolutionary newspaper published by a local alliance of Third and Fourth Internationales in Saigon between 1933 and 1937, shows that news from abroad concentrated on events in France, Spain, the Soviet Union, Ethiopia and China, in that order, but none on Southeast Asia and much less the Philippines.⁹⁰ This mutual ignorance is confirmed indirectly by PKP leader Jose Lava writing about the party's 30th anniversary. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, according to Lava, the major influences on the Philippine anti-imperialist movement were the Chinese and Indonesian struggles, as well as the October Revolution, of course. But the Indochinese revolution is not mentioned.⁹¹ In fact, one of the reasons advanced by the PKP for the failure of

⁸⁷ See V. Thompson and J. Adloff, *The Left Wing in Southeast Asia* (New York, 1950), pp. 24, 212, 270, 284; Michael Williams, "Sneevliet and the Birth of Asian Communism," *New Left Review* (Sept.-Oct. 1980), pp. 83-86; and Charles McLane, *Soviet Strategies in Southeast Asia: An Exploration of Eastern Policies Under Lenin and Stalin* (Princeton University, 1966), p. 82n, which disputes Sneevliet's link with the Philippines.

⁸⁸ E. H. Carr, *Socialism In One Country, 1924-1926*, vol. 3, part II of *A History of Soviet Russia* (London, 1964), pp. 621-623; McLane, *op. cit.*, p. 70; Gregorio Santayana (Jose Lava), *Milestones of the History of the Philippine Communist Party* (circa Sept. 1950), pp. 6, 8.

⁸⁹ This is not to suggest utter ignorance, on the part of Indochinese revolutionaries of the pre-communist era, of their Filipino contemporaries. The Dong Kinh group, for instance, was aware of Emilio Aguinaldo's role in the Philippine revolution (apparently through the book of Henri Turot, *Aguinaldo et les Philippines*, published in Paris by Stock in 1900.) See, in this regard, the following studies in Walter Vella (ed.), *Aspects of Vietnamese History* (University of Hawaii, 1973): Vu Duc Bang, "The Dong Kinh Free School Movement, 1907-1908", p. 55, and Hoang Ngoc Thanh, "Quoc Ngu and the Development of Modern Vietnamese Literature", p. 199. Also, the Toa Domeikai group which Phan Boi Chau helped establish in Japan included Filipino members. David Marr, *Vietnamese Anticolonialism 1885-1925* (University of California, 1971), p. 148.

⁹⁰ Hémyery, *op. cit.*, p. 127.

⁹¹ Jose Lava, "Clandestine Struggles, Arrests, Battles", *World Marxist Review*, Dec. 1980, p. 124. See also Santayana, *op. cit.*, p. 54, for his references to "advanced revolutionary situations" in the early 1950s, which include the Korean War but not the Indochinese struggle. Elsewhere, Huk leader Silvestre Liwanag in an interview compared the Philippine situation in the early 1950s to that of Indochina: "We needed a peace to retreat and to recuperate, but we did not have one, unlike the guerillas in China and Indochina." In Benedict Kerkvliet, *The Huk Rebellion* (Philippine ed., 1979), p. 236. This recollection, made in 1970, does not necessarily mean that the Huks knew about the Indochinese situation after the war.

the Philippine revolution was its physical isolation from international allies, with virtually no support from abroad.⁹²

These considerations were quite obviously lost on the French agents, operating as they did from a necessarily limited perspective and above all on the assumption that communism was a contagious malady. The contagion could be limited, if not altogether eliminated, through a concerted multinational — i.e. intercolonial — effort. This strategy curiously prefigures that of the American camp during the Cold War and its local byproduct in Asia, the “domino theory”. As the Americans’ failure in Indochina shows, the French were not alone in constructing—and falling into—the same conceptual trap.

⁹² Jorge Maravilla’s critique of the PKP’s failure appeared in *World Marxist Review*, November 1965, and is quoted by William Pomeroy, *Guerrilla Warfare and Marxism* (New York, 1968), p. 178.