

NEWSBRIEFS

Bacolod, March 1970—

(from a NYTimes article by Philip Shabecoff)

"For as long as he could remember, Openien Polaez worked at cutting sugar cane on the haciendas of Negros Island.

There had been little joy in his life. Every day except Sunday he rose at dawn and spent nine hours under the equatorial sun cutting the dense cane with his bolo and loading it on wagons bound for the mill. For this work he was paid—in recent years—from 10 cents to \$1 a day.

His earnings enabled him to buy enough rough rice to provide his wife and 12 children with one meal a day. Once in a while he could even afford a piece of dried fish. He and his family never had enough to eat, but at least they did not starve.

Now, at 54 years of age, Openien can no longer work because he is ill. His stomach hurts all the time, his eyes are streaked with blood and his close-cropped hair is turning white.

The doctors told him he must have an operation right away. They knew he could not afford it so they gave him a note for his hacendero—the plantation owner—to sign, saying he would be willing to defray the cost.

But, Openien told a foreign visitor, the hacendero, Abelardo Bantug, who owns 500 acres of prime sugar land, refused to sign.

"I told him I would die and my children would starve if I did not have the operation," the ailing man related. "He answered, 'Openien, you should have died long ago anyway.'"

If revolution comes to the Philippines, it could start here among the hungry cane-field workers rather than in Manila, where there have been violent demonstrations.

... There is no question that these are the most oppressed people in the country, said an intense young Jesuit priest who takes part in clandestine efforts to organize the workers into unions.

"Even the Roman slaves before the birth of Christ were treated better than these workers," he said. "At least Roman law saw to it that the slaves had a piece of meat and a cup of wine every day. The sugar workers here have never tasted meat in their lives."

An official in the local government labor office—he was exiled from Manila because of his liberal views—asserted: "The hacenderos do not distinguish between their human workers and their carabao. In fact, they take better care of their carabao because cattle are valuable property and there always are plenty of workers."

... The planters often protest that the wages they pay do not reflect all they do for their workers. Many of them pay for the weddings and funerals of their workers and often bear medical expenses.

But, as in the case of Openien's hacendero, many of the planters do not follow these paternalistic practices. In any case the labor organizers insist that the planters should not try to give as charity what they say belongs to the workers by right.

... Conditions on the haciendas are almost unbelievably appalling. Although some of the planters are said to obey the law and treat their workers decently, not one of the haciendas visited on a two-day tour paid their workers the legal minimum wage of 4 pesos—less than a dollar—a day. Most of the planters were paying 60 cents or less.

In one field a group of young sacadas, migratory sugar workers from the nearby islands of Cebu and Panay—were resting for a moment in the shade. They are hired by contractors who take a percentage of the pittance the men are paid for every tone of cane they cut.

The young men in the field, ranging in age from 15 to 23, still had sturdy bodies, but faces already wore the bewildered look of defeat common to sugar workers. None had been to school.

The leader of the group, a handsome, sullen young man, said they were paid about 30 cents for each ton they cut and could net almost 60 cents on a good day. The contractor receives a commission of 5 cents for each ton and charges the workers about 30 cents a day for the meals of rice he provides.

The young worker had never heard of the minimum-wage law and did not think the hacenderos would pay 4 pesos a day anyway.

These sacadas live in typical quarters. Six families, ranging in size from 5 to 12 people, sleep in a wooden barracks about 15 feet by 40.

There is nothing but the bare walls and floor. There are no partitions for privacy. There is no toilet—the people simply go into the fields. One water tap several hundred feet away is used by all the workers. There is no school for the children.

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

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

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

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

... There are many—students, labor men, priests—who doubt that there can be any genuine reform by the Government and the planters. The sugar bloc is too strong, they say. Its members include the first families of the Philippines, the old oligarchs who, the critics assert, have the wealth to buy whatever they want from the Government and invariably do so. They also are said to be able to deliver the votes of the workers to any candidate they support.

Moreover, sugar is the Philippines' most important export crop. The United States buys the entire crop, giving the country a special high quota and paying a premium price. The Government would be loath to compromise the

export earnings.

The United States agreed to take 1.4 million tons of Philippine sugar last year, the largest quota given by Washington to any nation. The United States also pays 4 to 5 cents a pound more than the nominal world-market price for Philippine sugar.

The planters were unable to fill the American quota last year, but the powerful sugar lobby has blocked attempts to open new cane fields on other islands.

But new forces seem to be at work both on Negros and in Manila.

"The times are changing," a labor organizer said. "If the planters don't recognize it they may be awakened by bullets before too long."

Cagayan, July 1970—

(from an AFSC article by Russell Johnson)

Another problem related to the growing value of land and the development of agro-business in the Philippines is that of landgrabbing, a term in constant use by the press and in conversation. It describes the process whereby people with influence move in, with armed force if necessary, and take over, bulldozing houses and putting land behind barbed wire. In many cases the people on the land may have lived there for years but have no legal title, or if they do, they do not have the knowledge or means to employ the law in their defense. Another factor contributing to land-grabbing in southern Mindanao Island may be that at least three foreign mineral survey teams have been through various parts of the region in recent years. Newspaper stories at the time of our visit document the problem. In the *Manila Times* of July 1, 1970, this headline: 5 Deaths Blamed on Land Disputes. "Camp Crame reported yesterday the killing of five more persons in Cagayan and Isabela, caused by land disputes. The killing has worsened the already tense situation in the hacienda. A total of 17 have been killed in quarrels over land ownership elsewhere in the country in the last two months alone, including two Philippine Constabulary enlisted men in a land dispute between Christians and some 800 heavily armed Bilaan tribesmen..." Another story describes the journey to Manila of 250 northern Philippine peasants uprooted from their homes by terrorists who burned two whole villages in Ilocos Sur province on May 22. Any day's reading turns up several stories where the landgrabbing resulted in bloodshed... but most of the forcible evictions never reach the papers.

MANILA, June, 1971—

Seventeen delegates walked out and three boycotted the inaugural ceremonies of the Constitutional Convention yesterday in a dramatic protest over what they called President Marcos' desecration of the independence of the convention.

Raul Manglapus, former presidential candidate, said in a speech delivered before the Rotary Club of Manila on March 11: (quoting Servan-Schreiber) "Politics, the interplay between Right and Left, is increasingly the irreplaceable source of creativity... This will shock some of you who have learned to regard politics as the very root of our economic troubles. Our kind of politics, artificial, purely personal, yes. But not the real democratic politics—the

balanced dynamism of left and right which is propelling the Western democracies and many of our democratic neighbors way ahead of us in economic development

"This is the kind of vision—a flexible but discernable vision—which our new constitution should project to our people. Not a rigid, fixed vision of a state patterned after models made possible by conditions alien to our own—such as the welfare state of the Scandinavians—but one which will permit the releasing of those forces in our society which could produce a dynamic state of progress and justice in keeping with our culture and our civilization."

Haydee Yorac, writing for the Student Christian Movement of the Philippines, said "Certain organizations campaigning for a nonpartisan Constitutional Convention—the Christian Social Movement, the leadership of the National Union of Students, and allied groups—... claim that political parties should not intervene since they are corrupt and are the whole reason for our miseries. This position is deceptive, calculated to mislead the Filipino people into believing that the root cause of our present ills lie in political parties. They, as well as other organizations which self-servingly call themselves non-partisan, are only front organizations for vested interest groups. Politicians and other members of the ruling elite change loyalties without compunction because no set of principles or ideology distinguishes one group from another. Theirs is the neo-colonial exploitative ideology, sometimes open, sometimes disguised in progressive posture. They are divided only on the question of who should get the greater portion of the loot.

"Barring political parties from participation in the Constitutional Convention will not prevent vested interest groups—the imperialists led by the Americans, now closely followed by the Japanese and their local conspirators—from manipulating the convention and packing it with delegates who are sure to protect their interests. I see some selfish motives in the advocacy of Manglapus and his colleagues of the alleged "nonpartisanship." Note that the Christian Social Movement of which Manglapus is president, is not yet considered a political party and that Manglapus has been saying a lot on the subject of ideology.

"The tactic of nonpartisanship will only catapult into power a different faction of the vested interest groups represented by Manglapus and his industrialist friends who while talking of an ideology, have not come out with a concrete program of actively combatting American imperialism, while grudgingly admitting that it is indeed an evil thing. What is important is not so much that we expand the rights now guaranteed in the Constitution but that the people acquire economic power and use it as a weapon with which to pursue their political rights."

Amado Guerrero, writing for the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Philippines, wrote: "False hopes are being raised about the constitutional convention as a possible means of 'revolutionary' change to head off a real armed revolution of the broad masses of oppressed and exploited people. Reformists of various stripes and undisguised counter-revolutionaries play down the fact that this constitutional convention shall be held within an unchanged system under the sponsorship of a counter-revolutionary government in the service of U.S. imperialism, feudalism and bureaucratic capitalism. Erroneously, they play up the fantastic expectation that by a mere stroke of

the pen after long-winded debates, fundamental changes can be effected, irrespective of the basic colonial and class character of the constitutional debates. . . .

"The main task of all proletarian revolutionaries and all those who adhere to the people's democratic revolution is to expose and oppose the 1971 constitutional convention as a farce . . . It is only through an armed revolution these (compradors, landlords and bureaucratic capitalists) can be overthrown by the workers, peasants and all patriotic and progressive strata of this society and that a new democratic constitution can be effected to sum up the correct relations and express the true aspirations of the people without being shamed and frustrated by clever provisions and escape clauses. . . .

"Only after an armed revolution has overthrown the exploiters with their oppressive laws can the Filipino people convene a revolutionary congress to draft and ratify a constitution that truly expresses their sovereign and democratic interests and aspirations.

"We should cease to be duped by the counter-revolutionary idealist cliché that 'those who have less in life shall have more in law.' Laws are deliberately passed by the foreign and local tyrants of this society precisely to deceive and oppress the broad masses of the people. What is pompously called the 'rule of law' by the reactionaries is nothing but their own class rule."

Camp Olivas, Pampanga—

More troops from Task Force Lawin were airlifted this morning to Isabela where a large-scale operation has been launched against Commander Dante, head of the New People's Army.

Meanwhile, three more NPA members were captured along the operational area in San Guillermo.

Their names were temporarily withheld. The three reportedly gave vital information about the 50-man Huk band believed to be in the target area where Dante is holed up.

Last Friday government troopers reportedly made their first contact with the main NPA force in San Guillermo which resulted in a three-hour running battle, resulting in the killing of four BSDU's, the wounding of three others on the government side, and the killing of four Huks, including Commander Amor, and the wounding of four other Huks who were captured.

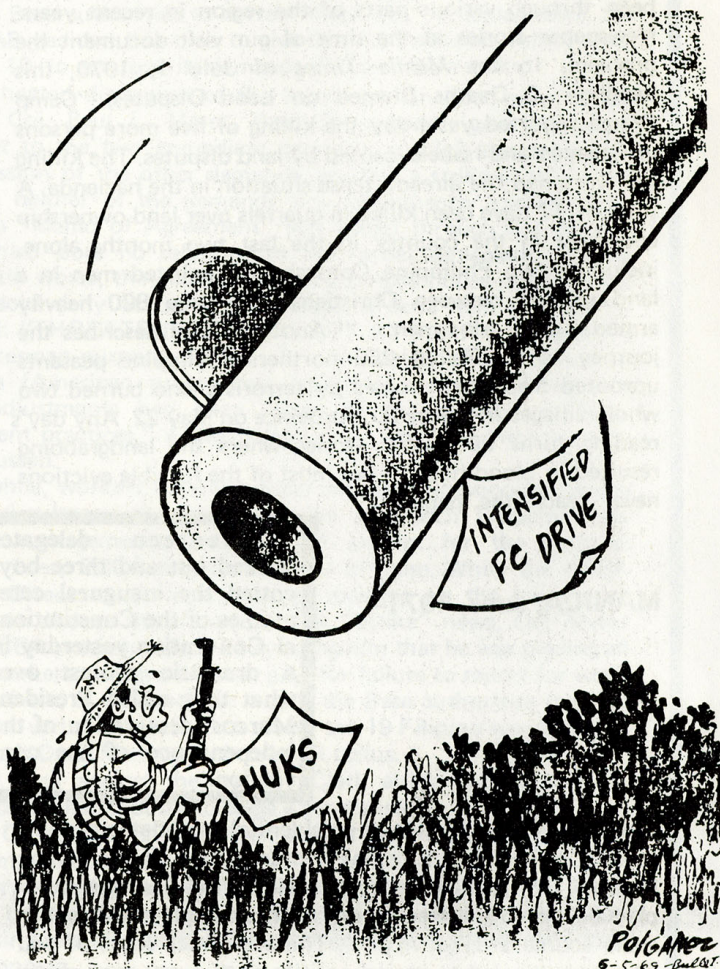
Guerilla History

In the decades prior to World War II attempts at land reform had failed. The feudal system continued but by then the Filipino aristocracy had filled the vacuum left by the liquidation of the Spanish elite. Labor unions began organizing workers during the early years of the century through lectures and the use of labor newspapers and nationalistic novels describing the degrading conditions of the poor and the oppressiveness of the landlords. Several organizations were formed. The Kalipunag Pambansa ng mga Magbukukid sa Pilipinas (National Peasants' Union of the Philippines) under the leadership of Jacinto Manahan, worked to politicize the otherwise docile peasants.

The Philippine Labor Congress was formed and affiliated with the Red International Organizations of Labor Unions in 1928. The next year there was an ideological split among its members resulting in the formation of the Katipunan ng mga Anak-pawis ng Pilipinas (Congress of Philippine Workingmen) under the leadership of Crisanto Evangelista, head of the printer's union.

In 1930 Evangelista and Manahan founded the Partido Komunista (Communist Party) whose aims were to improve the living and working conditions of the peasants and workers, to overthrow the American colonial government and to unite all the workers. However, by 1932, while still under the rule of the United States, the Supreme Court declared the party illegal. The members went underground and continued to work with the peasants and laborers of Manila and Central Luzon.

In 1929 The Socialist party was founded and acted as the political arm of a peasant union, the Aguman Ding Maldang Talapegoboa (Workers and Peasants Union) which was formed in 1930. The purposes were similar, that of securing better working conditions and increased pay for the laborers. In 1938, the Socialist Party and the Communist Party merged, creating a new sense of discipline and militancy.



With the outbreak of World War II there was greater need for a movement with a broader base, first, to maintain a high level of morale among the people and, second, to confront the Japanese occupation. In February and March, 1942, meetings were held among the leaders of these organizations to plan a strategy that would win over the moderate landlords and middle class to the anti-Japanese cause. The main policy adopted by this consolidated movement was to work for a free and democratic Philippines. The name chosen was Hukbo ng Bayan Laban sa Hapon (People's Anti-Japanese Army) or Hukbalahap for short, which was later shortened to Huk (pronounced-hook).

"The Hukbalahap had a three-point platform: economic, political and military. The economic aspect of the peasant underground struggle consisted of the development of all means of providing the people with food and at the same time sabotaging Japanese efforts to 'loot the country' The political aspect consisted of discrediting the 'puppet regime' and the destruction of its influence. The military aspect consisted of harassing the Japanese." (Teodoro Agoncillo, *A Short History of the Philippines*). The rigidity of its rules and principles made the Huk organization the most disciplined and powerful resistance outfit in the Philippines during the Japanese occupation. Central Luzon and some provinces outside the region became Huk territory. The people most affected by Huk sovereignty were the landlords who had fled to Manila at the first hint of war. The peasants, taking advantage of the landlords' absence, took over the administration of the land and made it productive not only for themselves, but also for the Huk armed units.

The success of the Hukbalahap as an effective resistance organization rested with its methods of organization. Built from the bottom to the top, most of its leaders came from the lowest stratum of society and understood the prejudices, customs, traditions, weaknesses and strengths of the people from whose ranks they sprang. The leaders were also zealous fanatics and would not allow for deviation from the goals set for themselves and the people under them. Their methods of education were varied and utilized writings, textbooks, historical pageants and interpretation of the experiences of the peasants as victims of landlords. The Huks had a wide mass base and a political sophistication that other resistance groups in the Philippines did not have.

The American military returned to the Philippines in 1944 while the war continued and attempted to take control of the Huk movement. The landlords encouraged American hostility against the Huks. The conflict developed into open armed clashes with the government fighting for the landlords but the peasantry siding with the Huks. (Formal American colonialism ended in 1946). By 1948 the Philippine Government declared the organization illegal and enforced this action with indiscriminate mass arrests and killings of anyone it considered suspicious.

It is very difficult to get accurate information about the movement with regards to its ideology, its sources and extent of resources and support. A very good account of the guerrilla activity was written by William Pomeroy in his book, *The Forest: A Personal Record of the Huk Guerrilla Struggle in the Philippines* (International Publishing Co., 1963). Pomeroy served in the U.S. forces in the Philippines during World War II and joined the Huk movement following the war.

In 1950 Army prosecutors found 14 Huk leaders guilty of rebellion, murder, arson, robbery and kidnapping. Five were sentenced to death and the others to life imprisonment. Nearly 19 years later, June 9, 1969, the Philippine Supreme Court ruled that they be freed because they had been charged with a non-existent offense by the army prosecutors. The court declared that their penalties were too severe and reduced them to 10 years for ten of the prisoners and 7 for the other four. However, the Director of Prisons, Alejo Santos, refused to release them. (Santos is a former Philippines Secretary of National Defense, selected by the Joint U.S. Military Advisory Group - JUSMAG, and was once wounded in an ambush with Huk Guerrilla fighters.) His reason, and those shared by army authorities, was that the cases had been on appeal during the prisoners' incarceration. Therefore, the Huk leaders were considered "detention prisoners" credited with only one half of the time served.

The prisoners have claimed illegal detention; the courts, through

Barrio Self-Defense Units

(from the *Daily Mirror*, 22 July, 1970)

The BSDU program is based on the "water and fish" concept of guerrilla warfare applied in the reverse. It goes by the principle that if you drain a pond of water, it would be easy to pick off the fish. During the Malayan insurgency, the British devised a strategy based on this concept. It was successful in crushing the Communist insurgency because of the nature of the guerrilla war—the insurgents were not indigenous Malaysians, thus it was easy to pick off the fish.

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Once applied in Vietnam, the concept refined into the Strategic Hamlet program developed serious malfunctions because of the fact that the insurgency in Vietnam was essentially one between Vietnamese. It was hard to pick out one Vietnamese from another and to herd Vietnamese in fortified hamlets ostensibly to protect them from the Vietcong, also Vietnamese. The hamlets were infiltrated and conditions in the hamlets were repressive.

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The defense department is apparently sold on the fish and water concept and is attracted to the Malaysian success but it relegates to the files the failure of the Vietnamese Strategic Hamlets. The Central Luzon situation is more akin to the Vietnamese experience than the Malaysian experience. The intention is to drain off the water by denying the dissidents their mass base, their logistical support and their freedom of movement. The BSDUs are the guardians of the static fortresses.

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But in Central Luzon, as in Vietnam, one must have an X-Ray vision or extra-sensory perception to know who is a Huk and who is not. The Huks in Central Luzon, like the Vietcong in Vietnam, are Filipinos not ethnically distinguishable from the population into which they melt. On the contrary, the PC and the military are a class by themselves, easy to spot out. They therefore easily forewarn the people and the dissidents they shelter by their own (the PCs) conspicuous movements and presence.

* * *

Granting the BSDUs have physically denied the Huks their mass base, the loyalty that the government gets from the "secured areas" is one derived from fear and terror. The government cannot expect to win the loyalty of the peasants by negative means—that is, by using terror and abuses against Huk terror. The Huks may have been denied physical base but the loyalty of the peasants is not automatically transferred to the government. The government's claimed advantages derived from the BSDU is, therefore, empty.

Judge Benjamin Aquino, have ordered them released but pressure placed on the Marcos administration and Judge Aquino have eliminated any possibility for clemency and forced a reversal in the court decision.

The committee on justice of the Philippine Senate heard testimony from Jose Lava, one of those denied freedom. He accused American interests of interfering with these cases and of being responsible for concocting the illegal offense. Unfortunately, the report of the court order demanding the release of the Huk prisoners has disguised what has actually taken place. These orders have been refused and reversed.

There has been sporadic fighting between the Huks and the Philippine government forces during the past decade. In January, 1965, 2,000 troops were sent to the central Luzon province of Pampanga where the Huks reportedly had gained support of 80 villages. The government views Huk tactics as patterned after those used by guerrillas in South Vietnam; President Marcos has called the "communist threat" "now quite apparent". In October 1966 the Philippine military was making plans for a large scale rural development program to counter the growth of the Huks. This usually means land re-distribution but today there continues to be a lack of real socio-economic reforms.

In the fall of 1970 the government pursued its anti-Huk campaign. Taking over where the Philippine Constabulary (the domestic forces) had failed, the Air Force Philippines carried out operations which climaxed in the death of Pedro Taruc and the capture of Sumulong, leaders of one faction of the present-day Huk movement. The two were taken with such apparent ease as to suggest their lack of support by the population of central Luzon. This particular faction is known for its tendency to perpetuate the social and economic ills through banditry and terrorism.

There is, however, another faction, the New People's Army, under the leadership of Commander Dante and Amado Guerrero. It has managed to survive the government attacks and win the enthusiasm of the people where it has established itself in Luzon in the provinces of Tarlac, Bataan, Zambales, and Nueva Ecija. The new People's Army has increasingly become an alternative to an oppressive status quo for thousands of disenchanted peasants, workers and students.



Manila, 1971

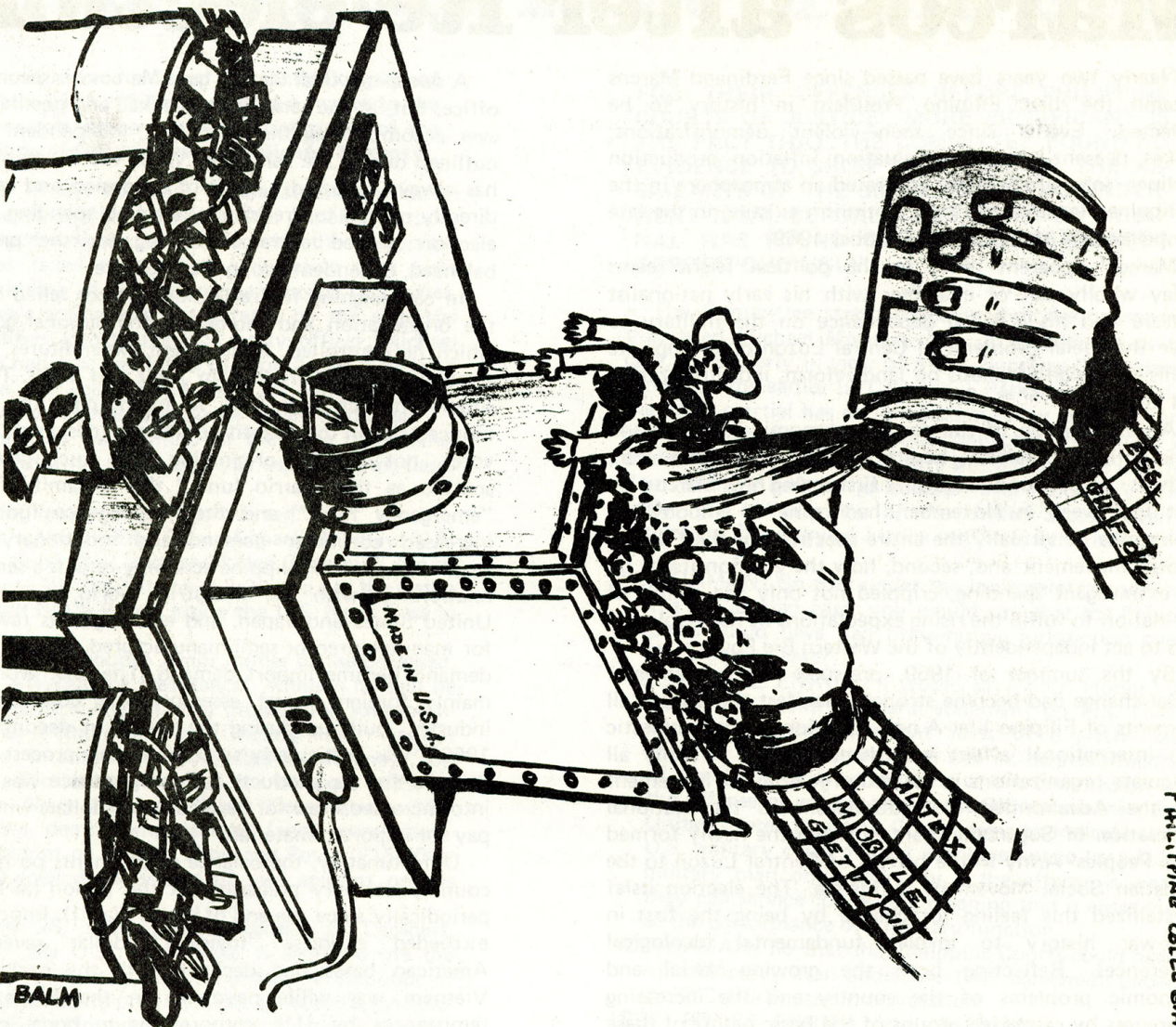
In his state-of-the-union address, President Marcos spoke of "democratic revolution". At once, the garrison conditions under which he delivered his speech attests to the fact that he now finds himself in confrontation with, and not on the side of, the people.

If there is any genuine revolution at this stage of our national life, it must be a direct action of the Filipino oppressed masses for liberation from American imperialism. In this, President Marcos has made clear the side he has taken: he has been most active in strengthening both the armed forces and ideology of imperialism and reaction. His administration has been the chief instrument in the suppression of political mass actions and in hunting down the leadership of national-democratic organizations. It has fully implemented the recommendations of the U.S. AID's Walton Report in reorganizing the police forces of the country. Today, all the police forces are centralized under the Police Commission whose present leadership includes CIA agents. The indoctrination of the police forces with the reactionary political ideology of anti-communism has been made more systematic with the establishment of regional police academies. Upon the advice and financing of the AID's Office of Public Safety, the police forces have been equipped with

the latest in "crowd control" devices, including electrically-charged truncheons, nerve and laughing gases, and toxic Mace chemicals. The Marcos administration has accelerated the formation of para-military units and the implementation of McNamara's civic-action concept, under the guidance of the U.S. Joint Military Advisory Group (JUSMAG). President Marcos himself has been most vociferous in his anti-communist demagoguery. These developments have been the response of U.S. imperialism in the face of the growing strength of the anti-imperialist forces, and President Marcos as the puppet-in-power had been the most effective tool by virtue of his office.

MARCOS AND OIL

Philippine Collection



President Marcos has also proposed the creation of an Oil Commission "which shall supervise and regulate the importation of crude oil and the production and marketing of gasoline and other oil products in the national interest". The problem that gave rise to this proposal is rooted in the monopoly of the entire oil industry, held by a foreign group dominated by four American giant companies -- Caltex, Esso, Mobil, and Getty Oil. Filoil, a Filipino corporation, is in fact merely the distributing arm of Gulf Oil, another American international corporation. This monopoly enables these American firms to manipulate cost accounting and pricing of oil products, particularly gasoline. To what extent American monopoly in the oil industry exploit the Filipino people is suggested by the following net earnings (profits) of U.S. companies for 1970: Caltex P292,604,932; Esso P6,198,787; and Mobil, P10,390,745. (See *Manila Chronicle*, November 27, 1970). Senator Diokno recently disclosed that in 1969 the oil industry made a profit of some P100 million. (See *Manila Times*, January 29, 1970).

These companies made a loan of \$0 million to stave off the dollar crisis, brought about principally by the heavy repatriation of profits by American investments and loan payments to US banks. Moreover, it was reported that these companies were instrumental in helping Marcos to postpone the maturity of dollar loans from a consortium of US banks headed by the First City Bank of New York. What are the conditions the American companies got in exchange? At any rate, what has become obvious is that they made the Presidential increase of tariff a good excuse for their price increase.

All the blame has been concentrated on President Marcos so far. But the power of the American dollar is more pervasive than that. How many members of Congress are in the payroll of the American oil companies or their front organization, the Petroleum Institute of the Philippines, as consultants and retained lawyers? How much was distributed by a lobby syndicate in connection with the Oil Commission Bill? Perhaps Congress, now faced by the threat of violent outburst of social discontent, might be sufficiently motivated to over-ride the pressure of the American bribe. But what kind of an Oil Commission will Congress establish? As the House of Representatives continues its deliberation on the bill, charges of "a powerful lobby to emasculate the proposal" have already been made. As proposed now, the Oil Commission has been described by one Congressman as a "toothless tiger". And predictably, the resulting Oil Commission will become another creature of the American dollar. It will regulate the industry in behalf of those who control the oil industry.

from *Movement for the Advancement of Nationalism (MAN)*

ED. NOTE: Reflects mass-line of MPKP.