

Philippine Bases and Inner-City Problems

by William Worthy

In her "Letters From the Field—1925-1975," anthropologist Margaret Mead includes a letter written in 1928 just after her arrival in the Admiralty Islands. It's a biting commentary on colonial outpost culture and colonial corruption in Melanesia:

"Such flimsy structures of a hundred or so white men govern and exploit this vast country—find gold, plant great plantations, trade for shell, hide their failures in other lands, drink inordinately, run into debt, steal each other's wives, go broke and commit suicide or get rich—if they know how."

Essentially, the system of colonial-style domination hasn't changed. Today in South Africa, alcoholism is a serious problem among Afrikaners who are obsessed with maintaining minority rule. Wasn't it Talleyrand, the wily French diplomat, who remarked that you can do everything with bayonets except sit (or sleep) on them?

Wherever you find colonialism in any of its forms—whether in the "idyllic" South Seas, in Mayor Rizzo's North or South Philadelphia, or in the Philippines—you find all the uneasiness and all the pathology of rule by bayonet.

The switch to open resort to bayonets has been coming to more and more U.S.-dominated countries. The Philippine Liberation Courier, published in Oakland, Calif. by the International Association of Filipino Patriots, points out that, until the late 1960's, the dominant political form in those countries was elite-run democracies: that is, trappings of democracy managed by landed elites beholden to U.S. interests.

But with the declining profit levels in the advanced western countries, the squeeze on the neo-colonies for raw materials, for cheap labor and for super-profits has become more severe.

Prior to the 1972 imposition of martial law (which came suddenly, about a year before its anticipation by revolutionary forces), the Philippines, for example, saw "widespread student demonstrations, peasant marches and workers'

strikes (in) an atmosphere of generalized social confrontation....The only form of state that could effectively silence nationalists and effectively impose a regime of labor repression was military dictatorship."

In politics as in physics, for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. Dictatorship generates resistance—at first amateurish and error-ridden. Out of that pattern of costly mistakes evolves a more sophisticated underground movement.

In the first period of martial law in the Philippines, recovery time, whenever someone was arrested, was measured in months. Recovery time is the term used to designate how long it takes the underground to recover from a loss in their ranks—particularly from a gap in the all-important secret communication network.

Today, according to U.S.-based Filipino exiles who remain in close contact with the underground in their homeland, recovery time has been cut to two weeks.

The exiles also point out that, unlike Chilean and Iranian and South Korean exiles in the U.S., they suffer little crass surveillance and harassment by President Marcos's secret police.

The reason: After 80 years of direct and indirect U.S. domination, Marcos and his elite associates know the white North American mentality. They are shrewd enough to avoid the scandal and the backlash that hit the Chilean military junta after the murder of a prominent Chilean exile in the streets of Washington two years ago.

Instead, Marcos subliminally influences U.S. public opinion by sponsoring the Miss Universe pageant and by garnering the positive publicity that accompanies a Muhammed Ali fight in Manila.

Obviously, though, it takes more than sports and beauty contests to keep a Tom in power these days. That's the real meaning of the U.S. bases in the Philippines.

Since July 1977, according to underground Filipino publications, the Pentagon has been adding secret military bases to the large number already there: In Bicol, in Sorsogon, in Samar, in Albay.

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One has to have a paranoid right-wing mentality to "justify" the bases on the grounds that the Philippines face some external military threat. The true explanation is that Washington and Manila see on the horizon—however distant—the possibility of mass rebellion and revolt.

The bases are in place to meet that eventuality. Also, for 80 years, the U.S. bases have been used as launching pads for intervention in China, Korea, Cambodia and Vietnam.

On Aug. 14, 1977, the *New York Times* quoted "senior Air Force officers" at Clark Air Base (which is a colonial enclave larger than our District of Columbia) as saying that "the base is crucial for resupply, evacuation and even combat in the Middle East as well as Africa....Within 24 hours its engineers can set up an air strip as far away as West Africa."

Thus the significance of the ongoing negotiations in which Marcos is haggling with his Washington masters over dollar amounts as compensation for base "rights," and over a de facto U.S. commitment to keep him in power in exchange for continued use of the bases.

Spring 1978 is the State Department's target date for making final the terms of a new treaty.*Reports have it that the agreement will give Marcos ten times the amount of military aid that he already gets from the U.S. The treaty is

* *Editor's note: As of August 1978, due to problems in negotiations, the conclusion of the new treaty has been delayed.*

a thumb in the nose at the citizen-exile-Congressional forces (including the Black Caucus) that last year forced through Congress a \$3.5 million cut (an 8½ percent reduction) in military aid to the Philippine dictatorship.

(Despite its "human rights" rhetoric, the Carter administration actively lobbied against that cut in aid, in the name of "overriding security considerations.")

Under our constitution, a treaty depends for ratification on two-thirds of the Senate alone. It does not go before the House of Representatives at all.

Nevertheless, in an election year, with a Harris poll having found 87 percent of the American people in favor of halting aid to corrupt and repressive dictatorships, the Black Caucus in the House may have it in its power to block the treaty by raising a sufficient ruckus, and by carrying the issue to the country. What is at stake, in colonial-racial terms, is just as important as what's at stake in the two pending Panama Canal treaties.

Win or lose, the fight should be launched by the Caucus, for obvious reasons of political morality, Third World solidarity, and domestic economic priorities.

For there can be no meaningful solution to inner-city problems so long as heavy-drinking, nuclear-armed, Manila-based Pentagon generals position themselves to prop up Marcos with U.S. bayonets, to suppress legitimate Filipino aspirations for sovereignty, to train and subsidize Marcos's torturers and to waste billions of our tax dollars on Philippine bases as springboards for brazen future aggression, in Africa and elsewhere.

The Friends of the Filipino People has produced a twenty-minute slide show entitled **U.S. Bases in the Philippines: Springboards for Intervention**, answering important questions about these military installations — their support for the Marcos dictatorship, their use in the Vietnam war, military plans to use them for U.S. intervention in possible wars in Southern Africa, the Mid East, and Korea.

The slide show is designed to be an educational tool that will help promote intelligent discussion as the new bases treaty negotiated between the United States and the Marcos dictatorship comes before the public.

Organizations and individuals may rent or purchase this slide show (complete with script) for use in their communities.

U.S. Bases in the Philippines: Springboards for Intervention

Rental	\$10.00
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The Friends of the Filipino People has on hand a variety of printed material about U.S. bases in the Philippines as listed below. (Prices listed per copy. Reduced rates for additional copies of first seven items listed below.)

Philippine Bases and Inner-City Problems (this leaflet)	\$.25
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Withdraw U.S. bases from the Philippines (leaflet for mass distribution)15
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No Price Tag on Philippine Sovereignty: A Statement by the Civil Liberties Union of the Philippines25
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