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American Policy in the Philippines: The Ugly American

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Perhaps, after that, we may be excused from taking this *Encyclopedia* seriously.

And yet, to be fair, we must mention that there is valuable material scattered somewhat thinly and unpredictably through the various volumes. Volume I, for instance, contains in facsimile the entire *Doctrina Cristiana*, the first book printed in the Philippines. Volume XVI (History) contains the very valuable essay on Philippine Cartography prepared under the direction of Father Miguel Selga S.J. for the Census of 1939 (but without the accompanying maps, for which that essay was an introduction!). The essays by Epifanio de los Santos, Luis Montilla, José Bantug, and a few others, carry the weight of their authors' authority (if we were only told where or when these essays were first published, if published at all!). In Volume VII (Art), that splendid lecture on Filipino "Musical Instruments and Airs of Long Ago" delivered by the late Honorable Norberto Romualdez is reproduced, with the original illustrations and diagrams and musical notations. This reviewer vividly remembers hearing that lecture, with Don Norberto now on his feet, now seated at the piano to illustrate the Filipino tunes of long ago. If only the *Encyclopedia of the Philippines* were filled with monographs such as this one!

But that is a vain wish, and this *Encyclopedia* must be regarded as unscientific, unscholarly and tendentious. It does contain valuable material, however, and like the little donkey of Iriarte's fable, it occasionally "hits the spot."

MIGUEL A. BERNAD

AMERICAN POLICY IN THE PHILIPPINES

THE UGLY AMERICAN. By William J. Lederer and Eugene Burdick. W.W. Norton and Co. New York. 1958. Pp. 285.

I

Despite certain defects, this is a book that cannot be ignored. It makes the reader want to take a second look at American methods actually being used in Southeast Asia.

There is one class of people, among others, who will not like this book—the communists. The book brands communism as "the face of the devil." It points out that communism has duplicated the ritual, faith, dedication, zeal and enthusiasm of the Catholic Church, and points out the obvious conclusion: that "both faiths cannot exist in this world at the same time."

As a novel, the book is too episodic. Characters appear in a chapter with a freshness and a sharpness that whet the appetite for more, but they disappear as suddenly as they came, leaving the reader unsatisfied. This is a major defect—if the book is to be taken as novel. But perhaps the authors would prefer their book treated as a fictionalized treatise—and it is thus we shall take it.

We limit our remarks to the Philippine situation as presented in the book, and as it appears in reality. We say “appears” advisedly because the situation here is not easy to understand. The politicians differ markedly among themselves; the economists differ even more. Statistics (when available) are not always considered reliable, and some writers say that each branch of the government submits the statistics that best suit its own ends. For some years the same number of unemployed has been mentioned over and over again, despite the change in the economic conditions and the annual increase in the labor force. Another case in point is the day-to-day change in the analysis of the nation’s health: “near death” one day, “well on the road to recovery” another. The diagnosis seems to be colored by the political hue of the diagnostician.

The backbone of communism was broken long ago, when Ramon Magsaysay captured the politburo. From that day to this, communism has been an underground movement whose strength or weakness is difficult to assess. There is no longer a Vietnamese or an Indonesian type of communist warfare here. The U. S. State Department has therefore a different job to do here, a job which at first blush might seem much easier than the job elsewhere, but which in reality presents some difficulties: for there seems to have been a slow erosion of the fund of good will that once characterized Philippine-American relations, established during half a century.

Why should this be so? We venture an analysis in the light of the book under review.

II

Americans in the Philippines are not confronted with the language problem that confronts them in other Asian countries. English is spoken widely in the Philippines, and for that reason (as for others) Filipinos and Americans have much in common. But they also have much that is dissimilar. There is a great difference in cultural background. There are the inevitable differences in outlook resulting from the contact of the most highly industrialized country in the world on the one hand and a predominantly agricultural and industrially underdeveloped country on the other. The differences run deeper than most people realize. Often Americans and Filipinos are talking as it were on different wave lengths. Certain reactions occur unforeseen; on the

other hand, certain expected reactions do not materialize. These things we have to expect when two peoples come together who have such widely differing backgrounds.

All the more reason, therefore, for avoiding any policy that would tend to widen the gap that already exists. Unfortunately, America has sometimes done just that. It has adopted policies which tend to widen (rather than to narrow) the gap between Americans and Filipinos.

To mention one outstanding example. As the authors of the book under review point out, Russia takes into account the religious sensibilities and susceptibilities of Asian peoples. Russia (for its own ends) does not overlook such an important phase of a nation's life. America on the other hand, while pursuing a somewhat similar policy in other Asian countries, has pursued the exact opposite in the Philippines. The Filipinos are overwhelmingly Catholic. Catholicism is part of the texture of their national existence. Yet America has often pursued policies that are repugnant to the susceptibilities of Filipino Catholics, and has shown marked favor instead to Protestant and other religious sects that control small minorities of the population.

To cite chapter and verse. The open attempts to Protestantize and de-Catholicize the Philippines during the first decades of the American administration have been pointed out in a long review in these pages of Zwierlein's book *Theodore Roosevelt and Catholics* (PHILIPPINE STUDIES VI, August 1958, 348-358). With only two or three exceptions America has over the past six decades sent to the Philippines as its principal representatives (governors general, ambassadors, etc.) men who were not only not Catholics but in some cases openly hostile to Catholicism and openly partial to organizations repugnant to Catholic Filipinos. While American representatives are hardly ever seen at Catholic functions (even those attended by the rest of the diplomatic corps), they are prominently seen at Protestant and other non-Catholic functions, and are sometimes known to work openly for the YMCA or for Freemasonry, both of which organizations are forbidden to Filipino Catholics and considered hostile to the Catholic Church.

Now this is in marked contrast with the policy of other countries. England, an officially Protestant country, where there is union of church and state (the English church being, until very recent times, bitterly anti-Catholic) has sent to the Philippines a Catholic ambassador. So has Japan, a Shintoist nation which until lately has been an enemy nation. So has Germany. So, of course, have the traditionally Catholic countries, like Spain and Italy.

It is perhaps not necessary that America should send a Catholic ambassador to the Philippines (though it has sent Clare Booth Luce to Italy): but it is necessary that American officials in the Philippines

should not treat this country as if it were a Protestant country, which it definitely is not.

In these matters, ordinary human courtesy and politeness (apart from policies of state) would help. We know of instances where American representatives, invited to attend functions in Catholic colleges, have not even taken the trouble to send a reply. Yet courtesy is the first rule of diplomacy.

It might be objected that non-Catholic Filipinos welcome this kind of behavior in American representatives. The answer is: of course they do. There is a vocal minority in the Philippines that is bitterly and vociferously anti-Catholic. But it would be a grave error to mistake this for the voice of the majority. The American State Department might do well to ponder certain recent events: In the 1957 elections, almost every candidate, of whatever party, took care to make open profession of his Catholic faith, often dramatizing that profession with the help of newspaper photographers. These seasoned politicians must know what they are doing. As for masonry, although it was powerful under American administration, it is a well known fact that for a candidate to be openly branded a Mason is now a political kiss of death.

III

One aspect of Filipino life that Americans might overlook is the great religious need and sentiment of the people, especially in the rural areas where the vast majority of the people live, a sentiment that is manifested in numerous rituals that show a daily life penetrated with religious motives. As in many cultures these practices might have been mere superstition in the beginning but they have been sanctified for the most part by Christianity and continue to nurture the deep religious feelings of the people. Modern research in sociology and anthropology is adding more and more proof to this thesis.

Add to this another contribution from the social sciences: in the introduction of changes the prestige of the lending society is extremely important from the point of view of the borrowing society. The person who recommends any change exerts a considerable influence. This is especially so in the Philippines where personalism is constantly evident. If a person is Protestant and the people he is trying to aid are Catholics, there is real danger that the people will carry over their dislike for his religion to his suggested program no matter how wonderful it may be from the technological point of view.

An American will find this hard to understand. Americans don't inquire about the nationality or religion of a man who invented a better mouse trap or a better rocket fuel. But our way of looking at things is not the personal way of, say, the Filipinos. There will be non-acceptance

of a program for reasons that we would not even consider significant or worth mentioning. The cultural attitudes that can not be changed must be weighed in the balance with every technological program devised. One of the greatest is the religious attitude of any people, especially of the people of the Orient.

America, by seeming not to take these things into account, and by seeming to ride roughshod over Filipino religious susceptibilities, has perhaps not helped its own cause in Philippine-American relations.

A case in point is the ease with which the British ambassador, already mentioned, deals with Catholic officials, and the warmth of the welcome accorded him anywhere in the Philippines. No ambassador has achieved such a personal popularity, or has traveled as widely in the Philippines, as has the British ambassador. In contrast, American officials are so noticeably ill-at-ease in the presence of Church dignitaries that it has provided material for jokes. As for their dealings with the Filipino people as a people, these are extremely restricted, American officials being much more aloof and exclusive than their British counterparts.

There have been notable exceptions in the lower echelons in recent years. For instance, in the USIS or in the Asia Foundation. One Catholic representative of the USIS in the Visayas left behind him an amazing number of Filipino friends, creating thereby a reservoir of goodwill towards America. He and his wife were voted the most popular couple in the city where they stayed. He was relieved, a non-Catholic was sent in his place, and the initial momentum of friendly Filipino-American relations was lost. We wonder whether the State Department realizes what it is doing in these instances?

If the State Department and other American agencies desire ocular proof of what Catholicism means to the people in these Islands, we suggest that some agent of the Department accompany Cardinal Spellman on his next visit to the Philippines. That agent could not but be impressed by the warmth of the welcome accorded the Cardinal everywhere. Someone has called him the best ambassador of the United States to the Philippines. And this is not surprising. A common bond of faith holds the Cardinal and the Filipino people together. A million people were gathered at the Luneta for the close of the Eucharistic Congress in December 1956 with the Cardinal presiding as papal legate. What Protestant or masonic or other religious minority group in the Philippines could point to a demonstration even remotely comparable? The crowds that listened to Billy Graham, despite efficient efforts at organization, were not overwhelmingly large.

American officialdom, traditionally Protestant at home, should remember that when they come to the Philippines they are coming to a

country that has been Catholic for four hundred years. We would respect Buddhist practices in Thailand or Vietnam. We would be careful not to offend Hindu susceptibilities in India. Why is this policy reversed when we come to the Philippines?

IV

But this seeming callousness to Philippine religious susceptibilities is only a part of a general picture — namely, what Filipino leaders describe as American indifference to the Philippines. “We are being taken for granted,” they complain. Whether or not there is truth in this accusation, the fact is that anti-American feeling in this country is on the increase. Philippine-American relations are worsening. Philippine claims to wartime compensation, the bases issue, the question of jurisdiction over offenses committed by American members of the armed forces on Philippine soil—all these are areas of friction which American diplomacy must try its best to minimize, not to aggravate. There is, no doubt, an American answer—and a legitimate answer—to all these grievances. But that answer is not being heard. American propaganda does not seem adequate to deal with the situation. And in the last analysis, the best propaganda for America must be the conduct of American officials and others who come to the Philippines.

In this connection, the attitude of American business men may need reexamination. It does not help matters to have an American lawyer, after eleven months in the Philippines, recently quoted in New York as saying that he could not understand why American business men were not flocking to the Philippines. “Stand on any street corner in Manila, and look in any direction and you can’t help seeing an opportunity to get rich,” he is said to have remarked. He is doubtless right if Manila were a part of the United States and if no other laws operated here except the laws of economics. But if he had been reading the Manila papers, he would have realized that the situation here is not as simple as he thought. To look at Manila as if it were New York or Kansas City is a fatal mistake. But this man’s remarks were given front page publicity—further strengthening the conviction of many Filipinos that Americans have a blind spot as regards the Philippines.

The point is, that besides official diplomacy at government levels, there must also be diplomacy at the level of the people, and particularly at the level of the intelligentsia. There must be people-to-people contact. How achieve this? Here we must guard against the notion, current in certain American circles, that size is important and that dollars are all-powerful. In fact they are not. The “Operation Brotherhood” of the Philippine “Jaycees” to help the Vietnamese in 1954 was a very modest operation indeed. It was nowhere near the Marshall

Plan. Yet it was a hugely successful operation as far as bringing the Vietnamese and the Filipinos together. On the other hand, huge American outlays, involving millions of dollars of foreign aid, have not always been successful in quieting anti-American criticism. Perhaps the reason was that "Operation Brotherhood," modest though it was, was done on the *human* level. It was done without fanfare and without any extraordinary expenditures. Doctors and nurses from the Philippines went to treat the wounded and the sick in Vietnam. That is the kind of language that human beings understand—and appreciate.

That is why the kind of help that the Catholics of the United States are giving quietly to the people of the Philippines is doubly significant. In the past three years millions of pounds of food and clothing, collected in America by the National Catholic Relief Services, have been sent abroad and distributed with a maximum of efficiency and a minimum of overhead expenses. The goods are distributed through the parish priests, thus insuring that they reach every nook and corner of the Islands, to those who really need them and can use them. The cumulative effect of this American act of generosity has not been assessed as yet. It has not been given much publicity, probably because the process deliberately bypasses the usual government-to-government channels. If there were Catholics in the top echelons of American officialdom in the Philippines, they might have been attuned to the propaganda value of this sustained effort. It would be enough to point to this sustained act of American Catholic charity to give the lie to the blatant remark made recently in the columns of a Filipino newspaper (we quote): "The United States does not give a damn about helping the so-called underdeveloped countries in Asia. All she is interested in is that the Asian countries reject Communism. America does not care whether people here eat once a day, or three times a day." Well, America *does* care. America has always cared. America is doing something about it, has been doing something about it for years. But American propaganda and American officialdom have failed to appreciate what American Catholics have been doing.

V

America must take the initiative, must use its imagination, must adapt itself to the changing picture in Asia. Americans must explore the ways by which the differences between us and our Asian friends might be lessened and softened. We must explore the possibilities whereby we may work together in greater friendliness towards our common objectives — for we *have* common objectives.

This should not be too difficult to do in the Philippines. Filipinos and Americans once fought side by side and died side by side. That was only seventeen years ago. Surely we cannot surrender now to lesser difficulties.

We suffer from a poor press. American propaganda tends to defeat itself. It is said that the American embassy here is interested primarily in protecting American business. (We know one instance where the bills of one American company were sent to a Catholic college in the Philippines by the American embassy in Manila.) If this is true, we cannot allow this to continue. If this is not true, we cannot allow the impression to continue. American diplomacy in the Philippines should represent the American people, not a minority of vested interests.

On the other hand, America should not panic when confronted with a hostile press in Manila. The largest newspaper in Manila boasts of a circulation of 111,538, and claims that this is larger than the circulation of "all other major dailies combined." That is not terribly large in a population of 24 million people. We cannot afford to ignore the Philippine press, but neither should we give it undue importance.

This reviewer would like to see the day when American help becomes more individualized, helping not only the Philippine government or government institutions, but segments of the Filipino people themselves. Perhaps the aid might be channeled labor-to-labor, athletic association-to-athletic association, teachers-to-teachers, school-to-school. Perhaps in this way we might be able to eliminate the criticism that "American aid to the Philippines has been aimed not at giving the people what they want, but at giving them what Americans think they should want."

Above all, we should eliminate the kind of American aid that decent people in the Philippines resent: such as the apparent American subsidizing of non-Catholic, and even anti-Catholic projects and organizations.

Unless America acts now, its efforts to help this country may eventually be frustrated. Nationalism is on the march. America must either respect it and promote it, or it will destroy Philippine-American relations. As far as the Philippines is concerned, though the book pictures the situation altogether too naively, the message of *The Ugly American* is valid.

GERALD W. HEALY

CHINESE INFLUENCES ON TAGALOG

CHINESE ELEMENTS IN THE TAGALOG LANGUAGE with some indication of Chinese influence on other Philippine languages and cultures and an excursion into Austronesian linguistics. By E.