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**Muslim Filipinos Between
Integration and
Secession**

Peter G. Gowing

MUSLIM FILIPINOS BETWEEN INTEGRATION AND SECESSION

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When on September 23, 1972, President Marcos announced martial law throughout the Philippines, one of the reasons he gave for doing so was the existence of a widespread conflict between Muslims and Christians in Mindanao and Sulu. The causes of this conflict, which began in Cotabato in mid-1970, are very complex, but the fact of the conflict — its extent and violence — certainly marks the breakdown of the Philippine Republic's policies respecting the Muslim Filipino minority concentrated in the southern islands. Nor has martial law up to now brought peace. As of this writing (late February, 1973), the most serious challenge to the President's authority under martial law has come from Muslim groups in Lanao, Cotabato and Sulu who have defied the Government's program to disarm them. Late in October, 1972, a band of some four hundred armed Maranaos attempted to seize Marawi City and were prevented from succeeding only by the swift arrival of Government troops, including Marines helicoptered into the city, who forced the dissidents to retreat after two days of fighting.

Integration

The policies of the Philippine Republic with regard to all of its minorities, of which the more than two million Muslims are numerically the largest, can be summarized by the word "integration." Indeed, one of the major instruments of the Government for the implementation of its policies towards minority groups is called the "Commission on National Integration."

The present integration policies of the Philippine Republic are actually a continuation and improvement of policies pursued by the Americans who in turn had continued policies initiated by the Spaniards. As is well known, for three centuries Spain sought to subjugate the "Moros", to Hispanize them as she had most of the other lowland Filipino groups, and to annex their lands to her Philippine colony. Unlike the Dutch in the East Indies and the British in Malaya, whose style of governing Muslim principalities within their col-

onies was termed "indirect rule", the Spaniards tried, with little success, to bring the Muslim Filipinos under their direct rule, centralized in Manila. The Americans, fully aware of the Dutch and British alternative, finally opted to fulfill the Spanish ambition of direct rule and went a remarkable distance towards its achievement before turning over responsibility for Muslim affairs to Filipino authorities.

The major difference between the American and Spanish integration policies was that the Americans sought to integrate the Muslims into a modern Philippine state which would be eventually independent, whereas the Spaniards wanted only to tame and civilize those "unexcelled pirates" (as Father Pi called them) and incorporate them into an expanded Philippine colony.

The integration policies of the two colonial powers, and now of the Philippine Republic, were predicated on a notion which was (still is) anathema to the Muslims, that there is no essential difference between the Muslim and Christian Filipinos except the comparative backwardness of the former which can be corrected by a sort of *mission civilisatrice*. Certainly, many Christian Filipinos are persuaded that underneath the Muslim and Christian Filipinos are the same except that through the misfortunes of history the Muslims were somehow left behind in their economic, political, social and educational development. The whole integration program of the Government seems to revolve around the philosophy that if the Muslims are provided with more roads, schools, health facilities, civic centers and industrial plants, and if they are instructed in more modern methods of farming or are given more scholarships for higher education in Manila or are offered more jobs in government, then in time they will be "integrated", that is, they will resemble the Christian Filipinos. While Muslims do in fact want many of these things, they fear this philosophy behind the integration program because it is really a philosophy of *assimilation* reflecting a basic contempt for the religious, cultural and historical factors upon which they anchor their psychological and social identity.²

Two elements compound the Muslim fear of the Government's integration philosophy: the lingering "Moro image" in the minds of Christian Filipinos, and the problem of land in Mindanao.

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Leadership of the secessionist struggle has shifted from the Cotabato-based Mindanao Independence Movement to the more broadly representative Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), seen as the political arm of the Bangsa Moro Republic. Units of the MNLF are found in all the provinces having substantial concentrations of Muslims.

The "Moro image" is a hold-over from three centuries of warfare between the Spaniards and the Muslim Filipinos in the course of which the former, using forces made up of large numbers of Christian Filipinos, repeatedly attacked Muslim strongholds in the South, and the latter, fighting for their independence, retaliated in periodical raids from the sea upon Christian settlements along the coasts of the central and northern islands. Cruelty was not a monopoly of either side, but in the minds of the Christians there emerged an image of the "Moro" as a cruel, cunning, treacherous savage, a pirate, a raider and a slaver. This image is operative to this day and colors Muslim-Christian relations. The image is perpetuated not only in the anti-Moro tales and innuendos handed down from one generation of Christian Filipinos to another, but also in the history books and other study materials on the Philippines used in the public schools. The Muslims feel this deeply and it explains partly why many of them in recent years have insisted on being called "Muslims" rather than "Moros", rightly believing that the latter term had acquired a biased and pejorative connotation.³

Many Muslims are also sensitive to the fact that some of the policies and laws of the Government reflect the negative "Moro image." The special pro-

visions in Philippine law relative to polygamy and divorce is an example. The laws of the Republic uphold the Roman Catholic norm of monogamous marriage with no divorce. But as a concession to those cultural minorities which traditionally allow polygamy and divorce — notably the Muslims — the Philippine Congress has passed, and kept on extending, a temporary law permitting those practices among the minorities. But implicit in such action is the view that the Christian Filipinos are morally superior to the minorities who are expected eventually to conform to the higher (from the Christian viewpoint) standard of conduct. The fact is, while few Muslims are actually polygamous, polygamy and divorce are sanctioned by the Qur'an and practiced widely throughout the Islamic world. Muslims resent the condescension implied by the special law and feel that freedom to observe such customs (or not to) is theirs by right.⁴

The Spaniards and the Americans both believed in colonizing Moroland, not only because such colonization would develop and harness that agriculturally rich area to the economy of the country, but also because the colonists — Christian Filipinos, Spanish soldiers, American plantation owners — would serve as a civilizing influence on the "wild tribes" of Mindanao. Similar objectives, together

with a desire to relieve land and population pressures (and their political concomitants) in the central and northern islands, have motivated the Philippine Government to encourage large numbers of Christian Filipinos to resettle in the South — on Mindanao, the so-called "Land of Promise." The process began before World War II but has continued vigorously since the war with the result that Muslim population majorities in Moroland have been markedly diluted, especially in Lanao del Norte and Cotabato. Muslims have resented the alienation of lands — even those which had gone unused — from the traditional pattern of community and clan ownership, with its *adat* and Islamic sanctions. They have also felt threatened by the growing political and economic domination of Christians taking place in their own homeland. Still, some Muslim leaders have readily adapted themselves to the rough and tumble politics within the Philippine two party system, and in a few places, even in Lanao del Norte and Cotabato, they have been able to maintain a substantial grip on public administration at the municipal and provincial levels, at least until the November elections in 1971. Moreover, there were instances of Muslims being elected to Congress from districts having Christian majorities.

With respect to the local competition for land, however, some Muslims have resorted to extortion and terrorism. Christian settlers, having cultivated plots of previously unused land acquired in good faith from the Government, were often faced with claims put forth by Muslim "owners" who demanded payment of rent or negotiation (sometimes renegotiation) of a purchase price. The Muslims sought to enforce payment by the threat, or use, of violence (such as shooting into settlers' houses at night, or setting fire to their farms, etc.). In many instances Christians settlers were driven away.

In defense of the Muslims it should be pointed out that in some cases powerful business interests or wealthy Christians, taking advantage of Muslim ignorance of, or indifference to, Philippine land laws, cheated them out of large tracts of their best lands, in collusion with corrupt Government officials — and sometimes also with the full cooperation of unscrupulous Muslim leaders who profitted from the arrangement.

In any case, the available agricultural lands in

Mindanao have fast dwindled since World War II as the population of the island steadily increased by the influx of new settlers and by natural reproduction. The Muslim population has participated in that increase, and tension between Muslims and Christians has mounted as they competed for the available lands — with the Muslims insisting that they have prior rights, and reacting violently when those "rights" went unrecognized. The present Muslim-Christian conflict on Mindanao erupted in Cotabato very largely because of this unresolved dispute over land.⁵

Most Muslim Filipinos have not been responsive to the integration policies of the Philippine Republic, though of course some have been. These include a number of Muslim politicians at the provincial and national level, and others who hold high offices in the Government. Naturally, they look to their co-religionists as part of their constituency; and they play an important role in moderating relations between the Muslim community and the national Government.⁶ Also included among the "integrated" Muslims are a few wealthy families, and those who have been educated in business or the professions outside of Moroland. They have become assimilated into the national community, beneficiaries of the system, and in some instances completely deracinated with respect to the Muslim community. Manila, Cebu and Davao — and other large Philippine cities — have Muslim residents who find it impossible, or undesirable, to return to life among their kinsmen in Moroland. But this description fits only a small number of Muslim Filipinos. It would be no exaggeration to say that the majority of Muslims, especially those in the rural barrios and in isolated places, have no real concept of being part of the Philippine nation. Their lives and loyalties are centered locally and insofar as the integration goal of the Government impinges upon them at all, they fear it. Among knowledgeable Muslims, many see integration for what it is in practice in the Philippines: an attempt at assimilation and annihilation of their Muslim identity.⁷

Secession

The Mindanao Independence Movement (MIM) organized in May, 1968, by former Cotabato Governor Datu Udtog Matalam, is having a grow-

ing appeal among Muslims. Originally called the Muslim Independence Movement so as to better incorporate Non-Muslim inhabitants of the island who were ready to cast their lot with the Muslims. MIM advocates the secession of Mindanao, Sulu and Palawan from the Philippine Republic and the establishment of an Islamic state to be called "The Republic of Mindanao and Sulu". Copies of the Manifesto issued on May 1, 1968, which called for such a Republic, were sent to Muslim Filipino leaders, to all Muslim heads of state, to the United Nations, and to the world press.⁸ Among other things, the Manifesto charged that:

The more affluent Christian majority has failed to appreciate and has never shown any appreciation of the roles of the Moslems . . . (who were) pictured as villains, dissidents, bandits, pirates, or just plain outlaws; history is replete with their deeds and exploits and yet heroism is a complete monopoly of the Visayas and Luzon.⁹

In the beginning, the Movement was a purely local affair centering on Pagalungan, Cotabato, the home of Datu Matalam; and though it quickly created a national sensation, it did not embrace more than a small number of Maguindanao Muslims. Indeed, Muslim politicians in the Government speedily rejected Matalam's independence plan; and by August 1968 he himself, conscious of the great numbers of Christians living in Moroland, was proposing a Lebanon-type of government for the projected "Republic" in which Christians would have guaranteed representation.¹⁰ However, since the present Muslim-Christian conflict began escalating in mid-1970, the Movement has gained in importance and greatly increased its following. MIM followers are now found throughout Moroland. Significantly, President Marcos in proclaiming martial law in September 1972 specifically named the Mindanao Independence Movement as a "lawless organization" which

with the active material and financial assistance of foreign political and economic interests, (is) engaged in an open and unconcealed attempt to establish by violence and force a separate and independent political state out of the islands of Mindanao and Sulu which are historically, politically and by law parts of the territories and within the jurisdiction and sovereignty of the Republic of the Philippines.¹¹

The various pronouncements of the MIM talk of the "struggle for national recognition, justice and equality." In a letter to the *Sunday Times Magazine* not long after he founded the Movement, Udtog Matalam declared that had the "more affluent cultural majority" (i.e., the Christian Filipinos) listened to the legitimate grievances of the Muslims, and if the Government had opened its eyes and ears wider

. . . then probably, there would be no reasons for the Muslims of Mindanao, Sulu and Palawan to secede and establish their own Islamic Republic as the culmination of their dream for justice, equality political and socio-economic progress.¹²

The MIM is only the latest of many formal efforts by the Muslims to separate Mindanao and Sulu from the rest of the Philippines ever since American military operations in the early years of this century effectively grafted Moroland to the political structure of the Islam nation. Muslim leaders throughout the period of American rule pleaded with the U.S. either to retain Moroland as a colony or to grant it a separate independence but in no case to place it under the government of Christian Filipinos.

All such efforts were in vain, inevitably so. From the beginning of Filipino nationalism in the nineteenth century, the Philippines with Mindanao and Sulu, has been part of the Philippine national concept. Filipino nationalists in the northern and central islands have always understood that the long-range economic and political viability of an independent Philippines presupposed Mindanao and Sulu being included within the frontiers of the nation. It is inconceivable that the Philippine Government would seriously entertain the secession of Moroland — and any escalation of Muslim insistence upon it is certain to be met with a corresponding escalation of the Government's efforts to suppress it.

Two factors in the current secessionist agitation in Moroland have the Philippine Government worried. One is the fear of some sort of irredentism which would unite Muslims in the southern Philippines with Muslims in Indonesia or Malaysia. Every now and again, there has been a public "scare" concerning the alleged operation of Indonesia agents in Mindanao. More recently, the Philippine Government has charged that Muslim Filipino guerillas have been trained by "foreign instructors" and sup-

plied from a "foreign country." While that country is not officially named, in all probability it is Malaysia, more particularly Sabah, whose Chief Minister, annoyed by Philippine territorial claims to Northern Borneo, has good reasons to discomfit the Marcos regime.¹³ It is perhaps significant that in 1971 the former Prime Minister of Malaysia, Tunku Abdul Rahman, in his capacity as Secretary General of the Islamic Secretariat, formally called the attention of Muslim nations to the plight of the Muslim Filipinos and requested President Marcos to permit an independent investigation by representatives of these nations into charges of persecution and "genocide".

A Muslim irredentism in the South promoted by Indonesia or Malaysia is seen, naturally, as a threat to Philippine security and national integrity — and it is also fraught with the danger of intervention by other Muslim nations. The announcement of Libyan Premier Col. Muammar Kadafi early in June 1972 that he was sending "money, arms and volunteers" to the Muslim Filipinos caused no little alarm in Manila. It prompted an invitation to Libya and Egypt to conduct the investigation into charges of genocide which Tunku Abdul Rahman had called for earlier. Late in June and July, a four-man joint Egyptian-Libyan Mission headed by Egyptian Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs Mahmoud Hassan el-Arrousy toured Mindanao. The mission concluded that while there was no evidence of genocide on the part of the national Government, there was some basis for believing that anti-Muslim violence was being supported by local Governments controlled by Christians.¹⁴ Precisely to forestall any excuse Muslim countries might have for indirect or direct intervention in what it sees to be a purely internal affair, the Philippine Government stresses its belief that the Muslim-Christian conflict in the South has nothing to do with religion, but is rather a struggle over agricultural lands exacerbated by local political rivalries.

The second factor in the present situation which has the Philippine Government worried is the alleged connection between the Communist-led rebels in the North (i.e., the Maoist-oriented New People's Army in Luzon) and the Muslims in the South. It is reported that in June of 1969 documents were seized from Communist rebels which indicated that agitators had been sent to Mindanao with instruc-

tions to align themselves with Muslims advocating secession in order to incite them to armed revolution in common cause with Communists of Central Luzon. The documents spoke of infiltrators who were to encourage Muslims to supplant their traditional leaders on the grounds that they had failed to protect the Muslim people and had participated in their exploitation.¹⁵ Since the imposition of martial law in September 1972, Communist infiltration of Muslim ranks has reportedly mounted, and the Government believes that this signifies a new strategy to ease the pressure on the Communists in Luzon by escalating their activities in the South. Unnamed sources in a news article in the *Philippine Daily Express*, October 21, 1972 identified two Muslim groups — the Mindanao Independence Movement and the Ansar El Islam — with which Communist dissident leaders were negotiating in an effort to get them to join in rebellion against the Government. The article also went on to say that Nur al Hadji Misuari, "a renegade University of the Philippines professor and chairman of the Western Mindanao sector of the 'Kabataang Makabayan' [a leftist youth movement widely believed to be a Communist front organization, now outlawed under martial law]" was leading armed Muslims in Sulu. He is reported to have trained in military science and tactics "in a foreign country" and the Government has put a P20,000 price on his head.¹⁶

It is possible that the Government is deliberately magnifying out of all proportion the connection between the Communist dissidents in the North and the Muslims in the South in order to justify escalating its repressive measures against the latter.¹⁷ In any case, the Philippine Government's hard line against Muslim Filipino secession is made all the harder in the face of suspected foreign-based Muslim irredentism and charges of Communist involvement. A full-scale military effort by Muslim Filipinos to secede from the Philippines, if they could mount one, would almost certainly end in another Biafra.

What the Muslims Want

Disaffected by the Philippine Republic's program of "integration" and with no real hope of achieving secession, the Muslim Filipinos today find themselves caught in a position between these two oppo-

ing goals. Their rejection of the One and desire for the other has turned many of them to violence. Indeed, it is possible to understand the present Muslim-Christian conflict in the southern Philippines as but the latest chapter in a long history of Muslim resistance to subjugation by Christians. It is the old story of a stronger, more modernized people encroaching on the attractive lands of a weaker, backward (in terms of modernization) people, and of the violent struggle of the latter to survive and be free.

The fundamental question which the Philippine Republic has to answer with respect to its cultural minorities in general, and to the Muslim Filipinos in particular, is whether in this day and age the obliteration of the religion and culture of minority peoples is the only avenue to national unity. The issue, as far as the Muslims are concerned, is precisely that. No matter what the Christian Filipinos may think they are doing in their integration policy, the Muslims genuinely feel threatened by a Government which on the one hand says it respects Muslim religion and customs and on the other hand does such things as encourage Christian Filipinos to alienate lands in the traditional living-space of the Muslims, authorizes textbooks for the public schools which calumniate Muslim Filipinos, passes laws in a condescending and patronizing mood "temporarily permitting" Muslims to carry on practices sanctioned by their religion, and in general pursues a policy which it calls "integration" but which is really "assimilation", implying contempt for minority cultures. Muslim Filipinos see the present conflicts as very much a "religious war" no matter how loudly Christian Filipinos and their Government insist that it is not.

Short of the annihilation of the Muslims, the struggle between them and the Christians is not likely to be resolved until the Philippine Republic takes the Islamic religion of the Muslim Filipinos seriously and begins to make realistic accommodations with respect to it. There are some Muslim leaders who, while they see the integration policy for what it is, nevertheless understand that the secession of Moroland is not a viable possibility. Professor Cesar A. Majul of the University of the Philippines, the foremost authority on Muslim Filipino history, is such a leader; and he represents the views of a sizeable group of his co-religionists when he outlines

what it is Muslim Filipinos feel they have a right to expect as citizens of a Republic which declares its adherence to the principles of democracy and religious freedom. In two papers published by the *Ansar El Islam* as background material for its Second National Symposium, held in Marawi City from April 28 to May 1, 1972, Dr. Majul indicated some of the *desiderata* which if realized would, he believes, significantly help Muslim Filipinos identify themselves with the Philippine national community. In summary they are as follows:¹⁸

1. There must be a moratorium on the coming of additional settlers to Cotabato, the two Lanaos and Zamboanga. New settlers should be encouraged to go to other provinces or stay home in the meantime until all or most of the *bona fide* residents in the above provinces have lands of their own and have received titles to them. As much as possible, Muslim traditional areas must be given to landless Muslims as a first priority. As long as there is still land in other places in the Philippines for Christian settlers, Muslim traditional areas must be closed to them until the Muslims there come to know more of how to develop and legally protect their lands under the present system.

2. In predominantly Muslim areas, the law enforcement agents must be Muslims, who know more about the problems and peculiarities of their fellow Muslims. Regarding the existence of Christian minorities among the Muslims, there must be a reinforcement of the Islamic principle that they are entitled to be protected by the Muslims.

3. The Government should establish more educational institutions in Muslim municipalities, with books which do not hurt the sensibilities of Muslims (e.g., avoiding references to the raising and eating of pigs). Such schools should inculcate the civic duties of Filipino citizens. What is needed is an education system which does not cater solely to the moral values of a single cultural group (i.e., the Christians) but one in which, for example, history books give accounts of the brave struggle of the Muslims for freedom and independence, and Muslim heroes as well as Christian heroes are lifted up as models of valor and patriotism instead of being dismissed as pirates and bandits. As much as possible, non-Muslim missionaries should be persuaded to stay away from strictly Muslim communities. And Government officials should do nothing to dis-

courage the establishment of *madrasah* (Islamic religious schools).

4. The economic progress of the Muslims should be advanced by Government-aided electrification projects, more and better roads, civic centers and agricultural schools in the Muslim areas. Muslim capital should be pooled for industries, however small, to provide more employment for Muslims.

5. Muslims should strive to know more about their faith and should develop the Islamic virtues of compassion, mercy, bravery, cleanliness, steadfastness, justice, patience, straight talking and, above all, the love of learning. They should be vigilant against all forms of exploitation whether in the Muslim community or in the national community.

6. Important elements of the *Shari'ah* (Islamic law), especially those pertaining to personal and family relations, ought to be allowed to apply to Muslims out of respect for their consciousness as a distinct religious community. The Muslims of the Philippines, on account of their religion, culture and history, are a special people, and this should be recognized by non-Muslims.

7. In connection with this last, the Constitution of the Philippines should be altered to provide some form of autonomy for the Muslim provinces under the Republic — possibly providing for their restructuring as states federally related to the Republic.

8. Professor Majul and many other Muslim leaders are convinced that Muslim Filipinos will be committed to the Philippine national community only when they can feel that they are not placed at an economic disadvantage in it, and when they are assured that they are free to develop their religious institutions unhindered. "These leaders believe," says Dr. Majul, "that the Muslims have the proper ideology and inner resources to generate for them a better life without the tutorship and condescending attitude of non-Muslim policy leaders or politicians."¹⁹

Update, October 1975

The preceding sections were written early in 1973. Many developments have occurred in the Mindanao-Sulu situation since that time and it seems a good idea to briefly indicate some of the developments.

For one thing, the secessionist struggle has

escalated and the Government's efforts to suppress it have correspondingly mounted. The suffering and dislocation in the past three years has been terrible. Moreover, leadership of the secessionist struggle has shifted from the Cotabato-based Mindanao Independence Movement to the more broadly representative Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF). Indeed, the MNLF is seen as the political arm of the Bangsa Moro Republic and it co-ordinates the deployment and strategy of the Bangsa Moro Army, units of which are found in all the provinces having substantial concentrations of Muslims. The Chairman of the Central Committee of the MNLF (which surfaced shortly after Martial Law was declared) is Nur Misuari, mentioned earlier. He is today the pre-eminent leader of the Muslim rebels and his importance is perhaps symbolized by the fact that the price on his head is now P200,000, ten times what it was in 1973.

The Philippine Government has responded in three ways to the deteriorating situation in the South; militarily, socio-economically and diplomatically. Against rebels armed with automatic rifles and anti-tank rockets (acquired with Libyan funds and smuggled in via Sabah), the military has used everything from fierce Ilongot troops (from Luzon) to F-86 Sabrejets. Reliable statistics are not available but perhaps the military dimensions of the Mindanao situation can be gauged from the following figures given in an Associated Press dispatch from Manila in August 1975:

- * Rebels have tied up more than 50,000 troops including from 15,000 to 20,000 civil defenders, mostly Christians.
- * Military observers figure that 70% of all Philippine Army units are now in the South.
- * In the three years since Martial Law was imposed, military spending has increased from US \$80 million per year to US \$325 million, much of it in Mindanao.
- * Estimates of the military dead in three years range from 1,500 to 3,000. Because the rebels usually withdraw from battle with their dead and wounded, no estimates of their casualties is available.
- * Roman Catholic priests in Mindanao estimate civilian casualties at 13,000 in three years, with death tolls as high as 300 in single cases.
- * According to Government figures, the fighting

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in Mindanao and Sulu has displaced 1.5 million people, Muslim and Christian.

*The military estimates that from 1,000 to 2,000 rebels are mobilized on the 400 square miles of Jolo Island — and perhaps triple that figure elsewhere in the South. Muslim rebel sympathizers (many with relatives in rebel ranks) say that there are 20,000 to 30,000 dissidents and supporters who, they say, are stockpiling weapons and training for another push.

President Marcos has said time and again that the problems in the Muslim South defy military solutions, and he has insisted that it is in the socio-economic sphere that permanent answers will be found. Accordingly, the Government has put forward a grand program of socio-economic development — so far characterized by a modicum of achievement and a maximum of promisory notes on the future — which calls for the improvement of agricultural production, the multiplying of infrastructure projects, the expansion of health facilities and services, the development of industries and the development of human resources through education and manpower training. Certainly, scattered here and there in the Muslim areas are some visible accomplishments such as rural electrification, improved roads and bridges and a few irrigation projects. Perhaps we should not chide too much that the achievements have not been more dramatic, for the Philippines is after all a developing country and most of its people and all of its provinces are in need of development capital. The financial resources for development in Mindanao and Sulu, as for everywhere else in the nation, are limited. Quite likely the Government is doing about all it can, given the unsettled conditions in the region. Moreover, as marks of its sensitivity to the specifically Islamic religious dimensions of the Mindanao-Sulu situation, the Government has taken long strides towards the codification of Muslim (personal) law; organized, with generous capitalization, the Philippine Amanah Bank whose lending policies are attuned to Muslim law; established the Institute of Islamic Studies in the University of the Philippines System; and legalized several Muslim holidays.

In the field of diplomacy, the Government has registered some gains. Concerned about irredentism involving the Muslim population in the South and

the neighboring Muslim states of Indonesia and Malaysia, President Marcos early in 1974 received assurances from both countries that their policy was to see the Mindanao-Sulu crisis settled within the territorial and political sovereignty of the Republic of the Philippines. This same policy, doubtless prompted by anxiety over the adverse effects which communal unrest anywhere in the region has on the stability of all of the ASEAN-member states,²⁰ was adopted by the Fifth Islamic Foreign Ministers Conference meeting in Kuala Lumpur in June of that year. Since the Philippines receives a large percentage of its oil from Middle East countries represented in that Conference, the adoption of that policy was good news indeed. To be sure, the Islamic Foreign Ministers have had no more power to control the open and direct support which Libya gives to the Filipino Muslim rebels than the Malaysian Government has had (at least until recently) in checking the support which Sabah's Chief Minister, Tun Mustapha, has been giving to the MNLF.

In July 1975 Tun Mustapha's leadership in Sabah began running into trouble, particularly when the Yang Dipertuan Negara (Head of State), Tun Muhammad Fuad, resigned charging that Mustapha was plotting to take Sabah out of the Malaysian Federation and establish an independent state, possibly including portions of the southern Philippines. The dynamics behind this development are still unclear, but the upshot is that Tun Mustapha has announced his retirement as Chief Minister at the end of this month (October 1975). This is a consummation devoutly wished as far as the Philippine Government is concerned — and it is possibly the result of behind-the-scenes maneuvering on the part of Malaysia's Prime Minister, Tun Abdul Razak. At any rate the immediate effect in the southern Philippines has been a choking off of the flow of funds and supplies to the Filipino rebels in Mindanao and Sulu — at least those for which Sabah was the conduit. This has had the result of accelerating the attrition of rebel forces, which has been going on for some months, as small bands of rebels come down from the hills and "return to the folds of the law" (i.e., become *balikbayans*²¹).

Starting early this year the Government has been pursuing a carefully orchestrated "peace talk diplomacy." Peace talks have taken place so far in two locales and with two different groups. The talks

in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, were held under the good offices of the Islamic Secretariat between a panel of Government representatives and top MNLF leaders including Nur Misuari. This was in January and at that time the MNLF declared that it was not insisting on secession but on a form of autonomy for the Muslim South. The talks broke down when it developed that the Government panel had no power to negotiate.²² The Islamic Secretariat (which serves the Islamic Foreign Ministers Conference and which has sought to mediate in the conflict between Filipino rebels and the Philippine Government) has been trying to get the talks resumed. Early in July it submitted a draft "agenda" to the Philippine Government for its consideration — and the agenda included an item concerning autonomy.

In the meantime, after the breakdown of the Jeddah Talks in January, the Government took the initiative to convene Peace Talks in Zamboanga City. Two rounds of talks have been held so far, in April and from June 30 to July 2. Despite the advance publicity that hundreds of MNLF rebels were accepting the Government's safe conduct to attend the talks, it was obvious that most, if not actually all, of the "rebels" who attended (over 200 at each round) were *balikbayans*, some of long standing, who were to some extent beholden to the Government's good will. The statements which came out of the Zamboanga talks could just as easily have been written in Manila. And it was not surprising that when the Government sent the proposed "agenda" it had received from the Islamic Secretariat to the "rebels" gathered in Zamboanga, they repudiated the agenda and disclaimed, in the name of the majority of Filipino Muslims, any desire for autonomy.

Doubtless because it realizes that the hard-core MNLF cadres in the hills are the ones keeping the rebellion alive in Mindanao and Sulu — not the "rebels" of the Zamboanga talks — the Philippine Government has kept open the Jeddah channel for whatever usefulness it might have. On July 6th, a three-man mission was sent to the Islamic Secretariat to convey the sentiments of the Zamboanga talks concerning the agenda, and to invite the Secretariat to send a delegation to Manila to work out a more acceptable agenda.

The Zamboanga activities seem designed for their propaganda value in the Philippines and abroad,

especially for those who do not, or cannot, follow events in the region too closely. The Jeddah activities seem designed, at least partially, to maintain an open channel of contact with the MNLF and partially to placate international Muslim concerns.

In the long run, possibly the most important result of the Muslim rebellion in the Southern Philippines so far is that it has begun to bring about some revision of attitudes on both sides. This is evidenced in subtle, intangible ways. The designation "Moro" has come back into respectability as the Moro National Liberation Front and the Bangsa Moro Army have brought the grievances of the Muslims forcefully to the attention of the Philippine nation and of the world. And forcefully to the attention of Filipino Muslim community itself. For the fact is, the MNLF to some extent represents an internal Moro social revolution as it seeks to show that the traditional leaders, the sultans and datus, have wittingly or otherwise betrayed the interests of the Muslim community.²³

At the same time, the term "Muslim minorities" is being abandoned as Filipino Christians become increasingly aware of the superficiality of the majority/minority dichotomy as it has been applied to their national society. "Cultural communities" is now the approved term and it represents the fact that because of a variety of geographical, historical and acculturative factors the ethnically more or less homogeneous Filipino people became over the centuries culturally, religiously and politically diverse. There is a unity (race, linguistic features, some basic cultural values) which underlies the acknowledged diversity and perhaps for this reason there is less talk than previously about "integration" as a national goal. In its place "orchestration", a term first coined by Filipino Muslim scholar, Prof. Alunan Glang, is coming more and more to be used. While "integration" has taken on the connotation of assimilation, "orchestration" connotes the harmonious striving of distinctive elements toward common ends.

A revision of attitudes is certainly a *sine qua non* of improved relations between Muslims and Christians in the Philippines. So is the rejection of secession as an aim of the Muslim struggle. This seems to have occurred. A few extremists hold out for a complete break with the Philippine Republic, but the larger body of Muslim rebels, represented by the

MNLF, are willing to settle for autonomy. Even President Marcos has been willing to entertain the notion as applied to the Muslim areas, though it is obvious that at this stage he and the rebels are far apart on their understanding of the modalities of autonomy.²⁴

The voice of the loyalist Muslim moderates has still to be taken seriously. Though they have articulate spokesmen, they have not yet effectively organized themselves.²⁵ But now that the rebels have declared for autonomy rather than secession,

it is possible that the moderates will emerge as the arbiters of the interests of the Republic's Muslim citizens.

As of October 1975, Muslim Filipinos are no longer in a state of animated suspension between secession and integration. They are animatedly striving for autonomy or some other political accommodation within the Republic of the Philippines which will assure them of a more just and secure future in their own homeland.²⁶

Notes

¹Cf. my "The White Man and the Moro: A Comparison of British and American Policies Toward Muslim Filipinos," *Solidarity*, VI/3 (March, 1971), 35-44.

²For an illuminating discussion of how one Muslim understands the integration policies of the Philippine Government, see Abdullah T. Madala, "Acculturation Not Integration," *The Crescent Review*, IV/8 (August, 1960), 6.

³In the past year there have been indications of a changing attitude towards the word "Moro" on the part of Muslims, some of whom have taken to making a distinction between the Bangsa Moro ("Moro Nation") and the "Bangsa Pilipino."

⁴Cf. James C. Stewart, "The Cotabato Conflict: Impressions of an Outsider", *Solidarity* VII/4 (April, 1972), 32, 41. In the same issue of *Solidarity* see the article by Michael O. Mastura, where the identical point is made with reference to the specific laws involved.

⁵Senate of the Philippines, "Report of the Permanent Committee on National Minorities," (April, 1971), pp. 6-9.

⁶Cf. Cesar A. Majul, *Cultural Diversity, National Integration and National Identity in the Philippines*, (Marawi City: Ansal Elam, Second National Symposium, 1972), p. 28.

⁷For a discussion of the "psychological death" which the policies of the Philippine Republic pose for the Muslim Filipinos, see my "Christians and Moros: The Confrontation of Christianity and Islam in the Philippines", *South East Asia Journal of Theology*, X/2-3 (January, 1969), 93-98.

⁸O'Shaughnessy, S.J., "Filipino Muslims and National Identity," *Impact*, VII/4 (April, 1972), 7.

⁹Quoted in James Ongkili, "An End to Neglect?" *Far Eastern Economic Review* (May 22, 1971), 20.

¹⁰O'Shaughnessy, op. cit.

¹¹*Philippine Sunday Express*, (September 24, 1972), 7.

¹²*Sunday Times Magazine*, (August 11, 1968), 2.

¹³In a speech before the Philippine Senate early in August of 1975, Senator Mamintal Tamano, a Muslim, reported that the Government believed "provocateurs" from Malaysia and young Muslims trained in the United Arab Republic were aiding the

¹⁴rebels in the South. Tamano said he did not believe this but warned that the worsening situation in Moroland would lead the Muslims to look for help from wherever they could get it. See *New York Times*, (August 15, 1971), Section IV, column 6.

¹⁴"U.S. and Britain Will Pay Dearly: Kacafi," *Straits Times* (Singapore, June 12, 1972), 1; "Marcos Probe", *Straits Times*, (June 20, 1972), 1; and "Mindanao: Come and See for Yourself, Marcos Tells Libya," *Straits Times*, (June 21, 1972), 4. A report on the Arab Mission's findings appeared in the *Philippines Herald*, (July 8, 1972), 9.

¹⁵Mention of these seized documents is made in O'Shaughnessy, op. cit.

¹⁶This same man is mentioned in a news item in the *New York Times* of December 27, 1972 entitled "Manila Says Thousands Flee as Fighting Increases in the South."

¹⁷The writer has heard persistent though unsubstantiated rumors from the Philippines in recent weeks (January-February, 1973) that the Philippine Air Force has been bombing and strafing Muslim strongholds in the South.

¹⁸The two papers are entitled "Cultural Diversity, National Integration and National Identity in the Philippines" (already cited in note 11 above) and "The Historical Background of the Muslims in the Philippines and the Present Mindanao Crisis." The list of desiderata here enumerated and summarized are culled from pages 28-30 of the former paper and from pages 25-28 of the latter.

¹⁹Majul, *Cultural Diversity* . . . , p. 29.

²⁰The Association of Southeast Asian Nations includes Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and the Philippines.

²¹"Returnees." The term was coined by the Department of Tourism in a promotional campaign to get Filipino residents overseas to return to their homeland and see the achievements of the New Society. Later it was jokingly applied to rebels who return to loyalty to the Government.

²²The MNLF claims it out-manuevered the Government panel which had come to Jeddah fully expecting a demand for secession whereupon it (the panel) was prepared to walk out, having satisfied the Secretariat of its good faith but demonstrating that the rebels were extremists making impossible demands. However, the panel was thrown off balance, says the MNLF, when the demand was for autonomy, not secession. Even so, the Government propagandists and news media in the Philippines, for their own purposes, treated the demand for autonomy as though it was the same as demand for secession. See *Iqra* (April, 1975), 2. *Iqra* is a clandestine MNLF newspaper circulating in Mindanao.

²³In an interview with a journalist in October 1975, an MNLF cadre declared: "We have nothing to do with the traditional leaders of Maranao society, the datos and sultans. They belong to an old order which no longer serves the welfare of the people. We will devise new, more serviceable structures. Datus and sultans are not essential to an Islamic social order. We can have a modern, yet Islamic structure for our society."

²⁴Early in July 1975, the President announced the setting up of four regions in Mindanao and Sulu each to have a Regional Commissioner with broad political and economic powers who will report directly to the President. This arrangement was described by him as "virtual autonomy" and "self-government" and was treated in the press as a concession to rebel demands.

²⁵The most prominent and perhaps the most articulate of the moderate Muslim spokesmen to emerge since Martial Law is former Senator Maminial Tamano. See his two memoranda to President Marcos, one published as "How to Solve the Muslim Problem Without Bullets" in *Solidarity* 8/6 (December 1973), 17-26; and the other entitled "Suggestions Re-Mindanao Problem," 22 February 1975, 99 pp. mimeographed.

²⁶Said the MNLF cadre in the interview cited in note 24 above. "A lot has to be worked out at the negotiating table. But we will not put down our arms until we see that we and our future generations are going to have a better life in our own homeland than we have enjoyed in the past."

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