

## REGIONAL AUTONOMOUS GOVERNMENT AND THE PHILIPPINE FOREIGN POLICY

ALEJANDRO FERNANDEZ

I was really hoping that our guests from Regions IX and XII would be around because I suppose they would be the real experts on the subject. My acquaintance with it is utopian. All I will present to you is the result of desk work. And I'm sure if you double check my presentation — my task, with what really is on the ground — you will conclude that I have no business addressing you on this topic. That as far as the subject is concerned, it is nothing but mere fluids on my mouth.

But what the subject is all about, I'm sure you are very much interested in because when we talk about regional autonomy in relation to the conflict in the south and its foreign policy implications, we are talking of a vital national problem. The feeling that the President is speaking is nothing less than the survival of this regime and the successful resolution of that conflict in the south.

It was Winston Churchill, in another era who once declared, "I did not become the First Minister of the Crown to preside over the liquidation of the British empire." A further quote from President Marcos is the statement that, as Chief of State it is his primary duty to preserve the territorial integrity of our country. The question of the dismemberment of our country does not arise at all. The question of our national sovereignty is not negotiable at all. As I see the conflict in the south, the demand for secession or a demand for autonomy on the part of the MNLF is a case of an irresistible will and in the President's determination to preserve the integrity of our Republic.

Theirs is an immovable rock, which is the case caused by the MNLF and sympathized by many more Muslim groups. Based on the bedrock of history, I'm sure that the Muslims were thinking of nothing less than the preservation of a way of life because Islam is not just a form of government; it is not just a lifestyle, it is a total way of life — a total culture including the way they govern themselves.

I propose to approach this in a manner that the other speakers did not. You are now aware that I look into this problem as not a simplistic one but an extremely complex problem with deep roots in history. So pardon me if the first part of my presentation will be rather heavy on history, and I'm also cheating you, because I'm listing so many pages from my latest book. I'm sure not one of you have read it. I will sound relatively fresh, maybe that of freshness of the dewdrops of the fifteenth flower of an early dawn, as Director Cañete would describe a young lady who would be here on the platform. I don't qualify for it. I mean the material is going to be relatively fresh to you.

I'm sure you are familiar with the fact that the Muslim provinces of southern Philippines were never really under foreign control. As far as the Spaniards were concerned, they were unconquerable. In some senses, the Muslim-Christian conflict which began in the 16th Century in the Philippines is just a reflection of a more ancient confrontation between these two ancient civilizations.

Somehow where Catholicism goes, there is degeneration in the quality of life. The poorest parts of Europe, Spain and Portugal, are Catholic Countries. The poorest part of Italy is the industrial north and is heavily Catholic. South of the Devulwark dividing France into two countries: the industrialized Protestant north and the poorest rural south. Latin America is Catholic and poor. The Philippines is relatively poor. Indonesia, a member of the Third World is devastated with poverty. As Catholics, don't be fanatical. We are Filipinos that sacrifice Catholicism. I hope we can sustain our Muslim brothers. They should be Filipinos first and Muslims second.

But we are talking of the historical background of the conflict. I said that the Muslim provinces were never really under effective Spanish control. That sums up three centuries of Muslim-Spanish contact. In the process of that violent contact, Christianized Filipinos were used by Spaniards in know-us-operation in the efforts to conquer the Moros. In the process, the Moros were depopulated, impoverished and eventually became backward relative to the rest of the country, partly due to the long war which the Spaniards waged against them. Then came the Americans. As you know, Spain ceded the Philippine archipelago including the Sulu archipelago to the U.S. via the Treaty of Paris.

Let's go a little farther back in 1856 when Manila was ruled by a Muslim royal person, in the person of Rajah Sulaiman. The fall of

Manila and Muslim stronghold in the Taal Lake region forced Islam to retreat to the south. In the south, Islam held the grounds firmly and the Spanish forces could only establish a few strategic garrisons in Mindanao, Basilan and Sulu. Vast areas of the region were ruled by the sultans; Christianity was never able to penetrate.

During the American period, there are four identifiable stages in the evolution of American policy toward the Muslim-Filipinos. The first stage was characterized by initial Muslim-American contact, followed by the military occupation of Moroland from May 1899 to July 1903. The case of the Moro province marked the beginning of the second stage when an American governor exercised politico-military control. The third stage began in 1913 with the appointment of the First Civil Governor and ended in the abolition of the Philippine Commission in 1916 during which period, Muslim affairs were integrated into the central government machinery under the Department of Interior through the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribe. In the fourth stage, Muslim affairs were under the jurisdiction of the Philippine legislation, except in some areas where American governors continued to exercise control. The Americans initially negotiated with the Tausug of Sulu, the group which they considered to have had extensive European contact. An agreement was signed on August 20, 1899 between Brig. Gen. John C. Bates and the sultan of Sulu and four principal datus. The Bates' Treaty provided rural health for the recognition of American sovereignty over the Sulu archipelago, and on the other, full American protection of the archipelago from foreign incursion; toleration of Muslim religious practices; and non-alienation of any portion of the archipelago by the United States without the consent of the Sultan and his court consisting of the more important datus.

In addition, the United States agreed to pay emolument from the Philippine treasury, not from the Federal Bank that is, money from our own treasury—to certain Sulu leaders, on the understanding that the Muslims would help the United States to suppress piracy and allow slaves to buy their freedom. By the way, during the American rule, even the salaries of American governors general were charged to our funds. The U.S. never spent for their own representatives ruling over us. Each party, however, had its own ulterior motive. The Americans initiated and signed the agreement to neutralize the Muslims and to prevent the opening of the second front while they were battling the Filipino troops in Luzon and in the Visayas. The Muslims saw the agreement in a different light. They believed they

were kicking the Americans out of their internal affairs.

The effectiveness of the agreement in solving the Muslim problems was questionable. First of all, the Sulu group represented only one of the five major Muslim groups. The others were the Maguindanaos in the Cotabato Valley, the Maranaws in the Lake Lanao region, the Atans in the Island of Basilan, and the Zamals in the Zamboanga Peninsula. Secondly, the Muslim delegates were not unified and did not recognize a hierarchy of authority. Each Sultan or Datu had his own sphere of influence which in most cases did not coincide with the area over which they actually exercise power. Thirdly, the Sulu leaders collect their salaries without extending any help in the suppression of piracy.

The Bates' Treaty was never considered by the Americans as a treaty since it did not require U.S. Senate ratification. The Secretary of War confirmed the agreement but legally it was the U.S. Congress which determined the civil rights and political status of the Filipinos. President McKinley, frowned upon the Muslim way of life and was bothered about the existence of slavery. The Americans did not appear to be serious about the Bates' agreement. They regarded the Moros as uncivilized, and accordingly, treated them contemptuously as bandits and outlaws. Since American troops were mainly tied up in the campaign in Luzon, by the end of the Philippine-American war, more Americans fought in the Philippines against Aguinaldo's forces than the total of the entire standing army of the entire U.S. and one-third of the population of Luzon was decimated. Since the American troops were mainly tied up with their campaign in Luzon, the American commanders did not interfere in Muslim internal affairs. Eventually, American administrators tried gradually to influence the life of the Muslims through the establishment of a school system, the introduction of modern medical care and sanitation, and the construction of roads, bridges and other infrastructures. At the same time, as far as practicable, taxes were levied, customs regulations imposed and mapping explorations as well as land surveys conducted. With the end of the Philippine-American War, more American troops were sent to the south.

Although the Bates' Treaty was recommended for abrogation by Gen. George David the military governor of Mindanao and Sulu, as early as October 24, 1901, it was abrogated only on March 21, 1904. Responsible for the abrogation was Maj. Gen. Leynard Wood, who later died of tuberculosis because of his sleepless nights in his long fight with Manuel L. Quezon, who also died of tuberculosis in

Lake Saranak, New York. Maj. Gen. Leynard Wood, then governor of the Moro province, wrote to President Roosevelt that the sultans governed the acceptable state of affairs among the Muslims.

In this comment of abrogation Gov. Gen. Wright declared that the sultan of Sulu and his datus had complied with their duties and fulfilled the conditions imposed on them by the said agreement. The Philippine Commission, upon recommendation of the military authorities continued, however, to pay the sultan of Sulu and seven of his datus, 'monthly stipends on condition that they will aid the American government when called upon. Even before the formal abrogation of Bates' Treaty, American activities in the socio-economic sphere tended to clash with Muslim values. The Muslims were suspicious on the attempt of the Americans to educate them and resisted the imposition of taxes and customs duties on Muslim properties.

As I heard yesterday, from our gentlemen guests from that region, because the Philippine educational system until today is still heavily patterned on the American model, they are suspicious of education from the center being brought over there. They insist on having Madrasas or religious Koranic School.

At first, there were isolated extremities which later erupted into full-scale military action. The first major encounter occurred in Southern Lanao in March 1902 and the Muslims challenged the free movement of American forces. The passage of the Philippine Bill of 1902 established the moral action of American interest in the integration of Mindanao and Sulu into the national policy. Americans as well as Christian Filipino leaders realized the political and economic importance of integrating Mindanao and Sulu into the mainstream of national life.

In preparation for such eventual integration, the Americans organized the Moro province according to the Spanish model of a politico-military district, since the political, social and economic setting of Moroland differed markedly from the regularly organized provinces in Luzon and the Visayas. Under this system, the provincial governor acted as the head of Moroland and the seat of government was located in Zamboanga. The authority of the provincial governor extended directly to the datu of the remotest Muslim group. The central government in Manila, exercised minimal supervision indicating a decentralized structure of authority. I'm going through all these details because I'd like to show you that if the Muslims

today demand autonomy, this idea has a long history going back to the very beginning of American rule.

Only three Americans became governors of the Moro province: Leynard Wood, Blizy, and John J. Persen, another famous American character. Leynard Wood, the first to assume the post set the course of American policy, waging military campaign against the Muslims who defied American authority. He never inquired into novelty but recognized the root causes of Muslim belligerency. For him the Muslim rebels were nothing but outlaws and bandits such that thousands of Muslims were killed.

On April 15, 1904, while leading an expedition in the Caracca region of Lake Lanao, Leynard Wood wrote, "There's only one way to deal with these people and that is to be absolutely just and absolutely firm. When crimes are committed, the offender must be surrendered or punishment must be strictly applied. The Moros of this section are a class of treacherous, unreliable people — of slave hunters and land pirates. Our resolutory and good-natured policy with them resulted in the establishment among them of the full conviction that we were both cowardly and weak, and out of this conviction grew an absolute contempt for our authority. Firmness and the full application of disciplinary measures will maintain order, prevent loss of life and property and permit good government and prosperity among the people. Delatory tactics, indecision, and lack of firmness will result in a carnibal of fire and absolute contempt for all authorities in this region."

Sometimes when I read this passage, I feel like quoting it verbatim as an advice to President Marcos on how to deal with the problem in the south. Gen. Wood's successor continued with this milled-peace policy, convinced the two American armies who were made to stabilize the situation and prepare for the eventual introduction of American values to a people who had shown their ability to resist military expedition for over a century. A contemporary American writer, Peter Gowing, who is now in Dansalan College in Lanao, a good friend of mine, writing on Muslim-American relations from 1899-1920 said, "The policy of direct rule was ex-post factor and adversely affected the social structure, customs and mores by which the Muslim-Filipinos had lived for a century." Another plea from another American of another generation is that we should allow a lot of autonomy on the part of these people.

From the Muslim standpoint to "develop," to "civilize," seem to mean the imposition of state laws and impeding customs. Laws in

its favors strengthen the politico-economic structure of provisional society. The establishment of provincial government whose officials issued decrees enforced by troops undermined the power and status of provisional Muslim leaders. Bypassing Muslim courts and refusing to recognize the customary judicial functions of the headman offended Muslim sensitivity. The Muslims resented the right out of lands which they have occupied but not titled for centuries, to foreigners and Christian Filipinos. As written in the 1920s and before the immediate catalyst that has led to the widespread, outrageous Christian-Muslim conflict was precisely because of land grabbing.

There's something that I'd like to say about the American rule in that part of our country. These are the identified areas in the fourth stage starting in 1916. This Act of 1916, the Jones Law, placed the Philippine legislature under the control of Muslim affairs and established the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribe under the Department of Interior.

In 1920, the Department of Mindanao and Sulu was abolished and the Philippine Legislature placed the seven provinces under the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribe. It was not until 1935, however, that the last American governor of Sulu gave way to complete Filipino control of Muslim affairs. During the American period, there was a plan to separate Mindanao and Sulu from the rest of the Philippines. The Bacon Bill of 1926 took total arrangement. There was another proposal in 1931 for the United States to retain Mindanao, Sulu and the Mountain Province in an independent Philippines — excluding Mindanao, Sulu and the Mountain Provinces. This American enclave will be developed into extensive rubber plantation and will serve as naval station or some other purposes in the American interest. Fortunately, the policy to maintain the integrity of the Republic as a whole prevailed.

But the Americans made use of Filipino-Muslims, in the Christian-Filipinos' campaign for independence and resorted to a wrong technique. In 1899, the Chairman of the First Philippine Commission insisted that the Philippine Revolution, as a Tagalog scheme, lacked support of the other regions in the island inspite Gen. Aguinaldo's having proclaimed the Philippine Republic in the name of the entire archipelago. The United States negotiated with the Sultan of Sulu as if he were a separate power. Separatism was further encouraged by the special treatment of the Muslims as a community different from the Christian-Filipinos. American forces were told

that the Moros were against Philippine independence if this meant submitting to a Christian government in Manila.

In 1935, a mass meeting of Muslim datus formulated a declaration which was sent to then U.S. Pres. Roosevelt and the U.S. Congress. Let me read the text of this declaration to you: "Because we have learned that the United States is going to grant the Philippines independence, we want to tell you that the Philippines is populated by two different peoples with different religious practices and traditions. The Christian-Filipinos occupy the islands of Luzon and the Visayas. The Moros predominate the islands of Mindanao and Sulu. With regards to the forthcoming independence, we foresee what condition we and our children who shall come after us will be in. These conditions will be characterized by unrest, suffering and misery. Our Christian associates had for many years showed their desire to be the only ones blessed with leadership and with progressive towns, without sharing with us the advantage of having good towns and cities. Their provinces progressed while ours are left behind." True enough if you go to Marawi City today, it is as if you have gone some 50 years back. It is as backward as that. "Should the Americans grant Philippine independence, the Islands of Mindanao and Sulu must not be included in such grant. Our public lands must not be given to people other than the Moros. We should be given time to acquire them because most of us have no lands. Our people do not yet realize the value of acquiring lands of considerable area. We do not also know how to acquire these lands by due process of law. Where could we obtain support for our families if our lands are taken from us? It will be safe for us to have a law enacted restricting the acquisition of our lands by other people. This will also preclude shorter travel." So, as far back as 1935, not 1969, 1972 nor 1976, the Tripoli Agreement has already embodied in this declaration the feeling of our Muslim brothers with regards to their own future as a people with their own way of life. The heavy historical burden that we have yet to overcome is that we are Filipinos who are not sufficiently educated about the values of our brothers in the south.

In 1935, under Filipino national leadership, the pacification campaign in Mindanao and Sulu proceeded slowly as the Muslims continued to distract the motives of their Christian brothers. The mass resettling of Christian-Filipinos in Mindanao is part of the social justice program to give land to the landless. In the process, they can get Central Luzon and other heavily tenanted areas starting in



1934 and the roster is aggravated by the problem of Muslims' suspicions. The policy resulted in Muslims becoming minorities in their own ancestral domain. Where Mindanao is the land of promise, it attracted smart operators who engaged in lumber, and mining concessions, leased wide tracts of grazing land. One of them is my wife's uncle who has a large tract of land in Bukidnon. According to that manifesto they don't know how to go about the process of law in the acquisition of land. They noticed that the lands that they had been tilling are taken away from them, titled in the name of Christians. Sometimes their own datus made money and sold these without telling their followers. Big bulldozers of the entrepreneurs in the north came down and pushed them away farther into the hinterlands. They just became a floating mass of landless potential revolutionaries. There were only two provinces, some other sources say four or five, but I say only Sulu and Lanao del Sur retained Muslim majority.

In our own time, the land grabbing problem, combined with the feeling of general neglect from Manila of the needs of Mindanao and Sulu and a mindless and unexamined policy of national integration which has been interpreted as tantamount to psychological genocide toward the Muslim has led to a serious secessionist movement augmented and funded by foreign elements.

President Ferdinand Marcos has cited the Muslim rebellion as one of the principal reasons for placing the country under Martial Law. From taking the position that the territorial integrity of the archipelago is beyond negotiation, he has nevertheless preferred to attack the root causes of Muslim disaffection rather than follow a pure policy of military consultation. Today, our government is pouring massive resources into the integrated socio-economic development program for the municipal regions, with special emphasis on the needs of the Muslim population — an effort being exerted as well through the Southern Philippines Development Administration, Mindanao State University and other agencies like the Amana Bank, and now the formally inaugurated autonomous government to enable the Filipino-Muslims not only to improve their quality of life but to preserve their personal identity within the framework of one national community.

I think we have the sufficient background for one session and at least a broader perspective of the Muslim problem so we may proceed from here to attack our main assignment today, namely, *Autonomous Government and Foreign Policy*.

First I'd like to explain the foreign policy process. If we speak of foreign policy we talk about national interest. What do we mean when we say national interest? Well, I think I can best explain it by identifying it with what President Marcos means when he says that it is his duty as head of state to preserve the territorial integrity of this country. Sufficiently, this is one statement which explains one of the ideas of national interest which is an irreducible thing. But you have to break down national interest into more specific foreign policy goals and strategies.

If you have come across President Marcos' statement on the guidelines of our foreign policy then more or less you will have some idea of what goals he is going to pursue. As an example, we have a continuing healthy relationship with the United States. But only after examining the conflicts of our Treaties and Agreements with that country will we find out exactly how we should deal with it. Another beneficial relation could be with that of Japan which is now almost equal with the United States in terms of major trading patterns. Identification with the Third World could be another major foreign policy goal. But one of them is this goal of friendship with the Arab countries. When we turn to this particular goal we have to break it up into specific program packages. We have to translate the friendship with Arab countries into more specific programs that we can implement. Encouraging more trade with Egypt could charter good ships to bring Muslims to Mecca, i.e., Filipino-Muslims.

Now, how do we arrive at specific foreign policy goals? When we come to that, there are two major influences: one is the pressure from the international environment, the other is the pressure from the domestic environment.

From the brief presentation of Mr. Tugung, we can altogether begin talking about regional integration. And how does it work into our foreign policy? The main reason is of course from the standpoint of the Muslim population themselves, they want regional autonomy and they did not just stop there — they did something about it. They organized the MNLF which grew out of the MIM — Movement for an Independent Mindanao — headed by Matalam. Nur Misuari and a group of ninety went to Malaysia in an island called Palao Pankor where he was trained to fight along Malkyas who just surrendered a few days ago. A second batch of 300 Muslim fighters were trained in Sabah, and these were the hardcore of the people who went out to the field and began the large-scale, organized,

coordinated, systematic rebellion against the Philippine Republic.

So the Muslims as a group became a pressure group toward the adoption of a particular policy. But they did not stop there. They asked their co-religionists to help them negotiate with the Philippine government to give autonomy to the Muslim area. Not just the Arab world in particular, but one part of it which are members of the ASEAN namely: Indonesia and Malaysia, joined forces with the Arabs and their own personal government in the interest of peace and stability in the ASEAN.

Indonesians kept telling us to drop our Sabah claim and to dialogue with the rebels toward a political solution of the problem. So the Moros are not alone in their struggle, they have mobilized their friends abroad to help them with it.

So a problem that ordinarily would have a matter of purely internal interest, a purely domestic affair becomes international. Why did it become international? Well, because in their fight in the field, they got support from Libya.

During the Islamic conference, as early as 1972, Col. Khadaffy had already been openly admitting that some armaments are being provided by Libya to our Muslim rebels. Sometimes I suspect that the problem might be even larger and maybe Mrs. Marcos should not have gone to Tripoli but to Moscow. Well, I'm sure Moscow would have told Mrs. Marcos the price for the Soviet Union to turn to Libya. But at least we should have known the price. We were banging our heads knocking at the doors of Libya but we were not getting anything. Malaysia and Indonesia, being predominantly Muslim countries, are sympathetic with our Muslim rebels.

I went to Jakarta in 1972 on a particular mission. I had a four-hour talk with the late Alex Castro Medero, the only elected Prime Minister of Indonesia. He married an elderly lady who was a revolutionary in 1945 and through my classmate friend, I learned many things from him. He told me that the Filipinos should not be deceived by the fact that Indonesia isn't able to help the Muslim rebels. In fact they have Gen. Suharto to thank for pressing down the lid and not allowing Indonesian sympathy in the south.

In Honolulu, our President was talking about fundamentalist religious movements. He was clearly referring to Islam as a world force not recognizing national boundaries. In fact in Malaysia, you can say you are a Malay even if you are a Muslim — the two words are interchangeable. So the entire Islamic world is tearing down on us, helping the Muslim population with that force. It goes beyond that,

because even if our instruments for moderating the actions of the Islamic conference is, by having a policy of friendly relations with the Arab countries, 70 percent of our oil requirements come from only 2 countries: Saudi Arabia, primarily and Iran.

When President Marcos gave that talk in Honolulu, he said that Iran has already cut off its policy of selling oil to the Philippines. So the policy of oil and the policy of the rebellion has forced us to take the structure of having friendly relations with the Arab world. During the oil crisis in 1972, we turned our backs on old friends — the Israelis — they must have got hurt. They were our friend one moment and the next they become our enemy. But what is more important to us, oil or the friendship with Israel? The friendship of Israel or peace in the south? We rather have peace with oil.

I advise you to continue reading the papers. I tried to form a picture out of the many sources of information like a jigsaw puzzle on how the situation looks like at this time in Mindanao and Sulu. I think you will agree that the MNLF is the strongest force opposing the Philippine government.

At this time the first base split in the MNLF rank is Misuari versus Salamak. Salamak is based in Cairo and Misuari is based in Libya but is now having a small office also in Tehran. There were treasures to bring them together to reconcile. It should have taken place in Tehran. Understandably, Salamak did not show up because we have to consider also that Anwar Sadat looks on Khomeini as a lunatic. He may not be able to find a home when he gets out of that meeting with Misuari. Salamak is probably weakened by the fact that his number two man, his commander in the field, Commander Ronnie has joined the government side. So you can expect that in the future, as the war goes on in the South, perhaps it will be Misuari with whom the government will favor. If we are to believe some ASEAN news sources, Commander Ronnie has been sending letters for sometime now for Cesar to join the government side. We can expect that Misuari will gain significant strength in the areas left by Commander Ronnie.

You cannot expect any quick settlement from that kind of situation other than at the negotiating table of military campaign. How many times have we read over the years — it has been 8 years — that the Muslim rebels are about to collapse? You will read about it again in a year from now. However, I agree with our friends yesterday that they have to thank Misuari, because without him they would not have the autonomous government that they are planning

about; they don't have to go to Manila to ask permission to put a nail on a doorknob in a classroom in a remote barrio in Tawi-tawi. Are you aware of the extent of the demand of the MNLF?

As negotiated in Tripoli in December 1976, President Marcos agreed to the demands provided that the agreement does not violate the provision of the Constitution or compromise the territorial integrity of the Republic. The demands are the following:

1. Putting up of a Muslim self-government in Mindanao, Basilan, Sulu, and Palawan or a total of 13 provinces. (The autonomous government encompasses less than the number of provinces originally demanded by Misuari);
2. Establishment of local security, defense and militia in the south. They want their own standing army, independent of the AFP. (Commissioner Datumanong was not with us as explained by Director Morrell because he was summoned to Manila to help work out the modality of a regional security force. But I'm sure the President has already set the guidelines, and that regional security force will likely be under the supervision and jurisdiction of either the PC or the INP. It will not be an independent army that can declare war in the Philippines. The President's idea is, I think, to integrate qualified officers from their rank.);
3. Dissolution of old units of the special force of the Philippine Army and their bases;
4. Control of all internal administrative matters;
5. Putting up of a Supreme Court;
6. Control by the Muslim self-government of educational institutions up to the secondary level;
7. Establishment of Islamic life and society in the south;
8. The right to run the internal economic affairs and to set up the financial resources of the Muslim self-government; and
9. The right to participate in the central government and all orders of the state.

On this government, Misuari said that it has taken into consideration making these demands the necessities of the government of the Philippines put into effect its previous commitment regarding the story of the southern territory taken away from Muslims after agresions which have been taking place since the war broke out. Land appropriated without any legal right, territories owned by Muslim ancestors should also be added. Muslims should also go back to the Islamic territories they owned until 1944, the year of evacuation of

the Japanese and American imperialists. All of these territories are to be the geographical areas on which the Islamic First Government was set up. Christians shall remain within the Islamic territories under local Islamic self-government and shall be considered a Christian minority within the Islamic land. Semi-peace agreement on the Islamic town is concluded. The Muslim self-government which will also be the object of this agreement shall be set up from among good Muslim leaders in the Islamic towns, especially the Liberation Front. Other minorities shall be allowed to participate in self-government in the democratic way from the basis of the principles of similar treatment for Muslims living in other territories in the Republic of the Philippines.

As you can see, there is a wide gap between the acceptable form of autonomy as far as the MNLF is concerned and the kind of autonomy that has been granted under P.D. No. 1618. On that basis alone, I predict that the problem is far from being solved because the MNLF is not the only group operating in the Mindanao area.

The NPA is another force in the island. I know Misuari very well, because as Chairman of the Department of Political Science, it was I who recruited Misuari to the faculty of the U.P. But not long after he got into trouble with a senior professor in the department did he come to tell me that he was leaving the department. He was a member in good standing of the Veterans Foundations. How many momentous events in history might not have happened if not due to fortuitous circumstances!

The main base today of NPA is still Samar but they are growing in Mindanao. As of now, the NPAs would like to win influence in areas not dominated by the MNLF, but there are border areas. I don't know if anyone among you have heard Enrile or the President talking about Meccas between the NPAs and the MNLF. Probably you will have in mind the joint operations in the border area. But basically the NPAs respect the integrity of the MNLF and they would not bother to compete with them in their own territory. But the NPAs now are as widespread in Mindanao as the MNLF.

We have been hearing of the lost command. Some say these are soldiers who are tolerated by the regular AFP commanders to operate on their own. Some say these are their visas in reentering into the Armed Forces when they no longer want to be lost. In other words, these are vast areas where we have a number of groups that want to win power, but the MNLF seems to be the strongest force

this time and probably the most principled organizationally. The NPAs do not want to molest civilians. They choose their targets very carefully and see to it that their targets will prove to be their political objective.

As regards MNLF, there is less ideological cause behind it (MNLF). This winds up our discussion. I'd like to leave it open-ended because you might want to participate and express your opinion on how you perceive the problem. As far as I'm concerned, regional autonomy the way we have it now, has a lot of leeway for growing in its scope. Our friends yesterday called it experimental. I'm afraid that although it is an experiment it might grow bigger before it becomes smaller. The many more things that they want so far has been given in the bargain with the President. I don't touch the structure, I'm just leading the discussion. I hope the substance of the discussion would come from the floor — you are the people on the ground; we are academicians. We may be wrong on our sources of information.