

OPEN FORUM

Governor Yñiguez: Prof. Fernandez, in your manifestations of tracing back the historical background, would it be possible or is there a possibility that if the Muslims have shown distrust towards "the brother Filipinos out there in Luzon," it is perhaps they noticed that they were greatly influenced by our colonizers and they saw in us an extension of this influence and based on your own statement of the approach of the American leadership of divide and rule? So, perhaps this distrust among our brother Filipinos, whether Muslims or Christians was somehow heightened because it was injected unknowingly to us, by our colonizers. Somehow it is rather strange that we, the Christians, would distrust our Muslim brothers because before the advent of the Spaniards, before we were conquered, I presume we were all Muslims. We had no other religion until the Spaniards came incidentally to my town, in my little island of Limasawa. We were able to acquire so much great influence from our *conquistadores* which consequently developed a natural reaction of distrust. Thank you.

Dr. Fernandez: It is true that we were all Muslims before the Spaniards came. I think Islam was only 50 years or so ahead of Christianity in reaching the Philippines. If Christianity has arrived in the Philippines a little later, perhaps the Philippines would have been completely converted to Islam and there would have been no way for Christianity to penetrate. But Islam was not yet firmly established and although up there in Manlapat, up there in Pampanga, there are evidences of Islamic influence especially in the Taal region. Taal was supposed to be an Islamic town. Even Manila was under Rajah Solaiman, a Muslim. But you see, they were hardly established when they were driven down town when the Spaniards arrived. It is only in the Sulu archipelago and Maguindanao in Lanao, where Islam had its chance to grow big roots. Up to the time when Spaniards began going in that area, the roots were so firm that it was, in fact, a case of religion becoming a rallying point against outside intrusion. The tree had grown and so these roots could withstand the winds blowing across the face of the earth. The tree stood, Islam was rooted, but not in other

parts of the country. But this also means that in terms of strength of the social fabric, the rest of the Filipino nation was relatively weak. Whereas, the social fabric of the Moros was strong and firm. The Muslims in the Philippines were the best organized among all ethnic groups. In a broader sense, I have to explain what I mean by a weak social fabric. There are many civilizational influences that are typical in the Philippines – among the most common is the Chinese influence. You still find this in so many words that are of Chinese origin – terms in commerce, in family relationship. Many social customs that we have are really Chinese without our really recognizing it. But fortunately, the Chinese were not the type of people who would conquer lands and colonize. They were just satisfied with trading relations and a tributary relationship. In fact, when the sultan of Sulu went to the court to the emperor and gave gifts he received much more in return to what he gave. They had a tenious relationship – not a relationship of colony and mother country. When Hinduism from India came to the Philippines – we have the Malay Peninsula, India, the Great Indonesian Archipelago. Before the cultural waves reached the Philippines, they were already in relatively weak forms. In fact when Hinduism and Buddishim reached the Philippines, the great Shri Visaya and Madjapahit Empires were already crumbling. In other words, I don't know if it were for better or for worse, but we never became true Buddhists. Our anthropologists have dug up in our river streams and other archeological sites, evidences of fragments of artifacts including bits of literature. They are not of the pure type anymore. They are only weak traces of Hinduism, Buddishim. So what remains Islam with us is the original Malay culture which is also common in other countries. But Indonesia became strongly Islamic. The other was relatively late in coming to us. In the case of Islam, it did not come directly to the Philippines. Before any of these could sink roots in the Philippines coming from the other side – first Christianity and then the capital expression of democracy up to the others. What happens is, whichever is the latest cultural wave that hit our shore, we get a bit of it. Filipinos are very eclectic then, we were christianized so easily and just as easily we were Americanized and next maybe is Shinto because I think the next wave is Chinese. I'm staking my reputation as a student on the proposition that before the end of the century, we will be more Chinese than you ever thought. Although I'm thinking that mainland Southeast Asia would be

something that would be very different from insular Southeast Asia. We are relatively protected, but just the same how can we resist that tidal wave from the north?

Ten years ago, that was before Martial Law, if you had been reading the newspapers, you will have noticed how strongly we condemned communism. At the drop of a hat, many of our politicians would get up from bed and orate against communism. There was a remark reported in the *Manila Times* by Sec. Kenneth Royal then Secretary of the US Navy, that the U.S. regarded Japan as basically indefensible, should there be another war, the defense position of Southeast Asia would be untenable. In other words, I found the American official as saying, "You better be on your own, you cannot rely on us. You will be difficult to defend." Immediately, I recall the Filipino politician, saying, "We should talk about anti-communism, our oratory against communism, because we have no qualms in the sense that the power behind us is saying 'bahala na kayo sa sarili ninyo'." But even until the fall of Vietnam, we were basically anti-communist. From 1975 and in 1977 there have been seminars and I participated in all of them. They were organized by NEDA with the participation of the Central Bank, the Council for Economic Development and various other organizations. The title of one seminar was "Lessons in Development" from the People's Republic of China. Everybody was receptive to influence from China. There are no anti-communists anymore. Senator Roy, for whom I reserved the best room in the Peking Hotel when President Marcos was there to establish good relations, was ashamed to go and finally, he told me why. He said, "But Alex, don't you know I was the President of the World's Anti-Communist league? How could I go there, for the President, to offer me as a sacrifice to Chairman Mao and say 'Let's be friends Mr. Chairman. As my token of our friendship, I'm delivering our number one anti-communist?'"

Only the Muslim in the South stood his ground, but he also has the price to pay. You go over his land — he is proud, he is strong but poor; he is under-nourished; the population is decimated. When you go to Marawi, it is as if it is way back some centuries ago in terms of filth poverty and illiteracy. By the way, the struggle in the south as has been happening in other regions is always characterized by a strong resistance from the outer islands against the center. In Sumatra, in Kalimantan, the central government was getting all the resources and nothing was trickling back

for their own needs. They united in the course of the struggle in the south but our Muslim brothers were beginning to make the same argument. Why should the forest and other resources of Mindanao be tapped by the center, don't they need these things too? They need these more because they are backward; they are way behind Visayas, Mindanao, and Luzon. The point is that I think Leyte and Samar can now begin complaining. I think I made a very long answer but I hope it is not too much.

Dr. Sicat: You mentioned something about complications introduced by the presence of the NPA and a few other forces in your area, Mindanao. I'm just wondering if they might join forces depending upon what they think should serve them at the moment. I wonder beforehand whether they converge on any goals at all, if any, and where they fall apart? My second question is whether you count in or discount the presence of the NPA and other forces in other areas? You also mentioned that, since the demand of the MNLF or since the second arrangement should form part of the little demands of the MNLF, things will be very difficult. Now again, I wonder if in the bargaining process, this kind of bargaining might be utilized or could one expect that two parties would start off on a converging point? It is possible for them to converge on a meeting ground and agree on a compromise. Is there any area whereby the MNLF might agree or do you think Misuari and company would push all their demands? I think the most we can make of this alliance is some kind of marriage for convenience. But once they are in power, I think they'll fall apart immediately because I don't believe there is any compatibility between their ultimate goals. They converge at the moment on the idea of land for the landless which is the appeal of communism and which is also a grievance of the Muslims who feel that they are the victims of land grabbing. As we can go by the history of any communist regime anywhere else, the next step is collectivization — the setting up of state farms. China did it gradually but within the first period, their objective was 12% of collectivization and 80% within some more years until it reached 100%. As for the Muslims, I think they are basically nationalistic in the sense that they have set their own beliefs; they have their own way of life; they deserve an existence of their own.

Do you think it will be very difficult to reconcile the MNLF and the Philippine government because the demands of Misuari and com-

pany have not been met? Do you think he will really push all the way through until he gets everything or would there be some points wherein some consensus can be reached and the Philippines can still retain its power and integrity.

Dr. Fernandez: It depends on the political will on either side. I think President Marcos and Misuari will not compromise the integrity of the Republic. He did not become President and Prime Minister to preside over the dismemberment of our lovely island. In the case of Nur, I don't know, he has to be a little more pragmatic because if he comes out with a thorough socialist program and be doctrinaire about it, I don't think he wants to go. How many Muslims would consider adopting the communist program of government?

Mrs. Benedicto: Does this tell us of the ideology of the Muslims? I wonder if this has filtered down to the individual Muslim or is this only on the top, on the leaders, and the others are just made to wallow? You talked about land for the landless and so on. Do you feel that they enjoyed themselves by being rebels and found that it suits their way of life and enjoying it more so, that they feel they don't want to go back? Do they not care whether their leaders think this way or that?

Dr. Fernandez: I will have to go out there and satisfy myself on the answer to that question, but I do feel that the situation is that the old leadership, the sultanate, the system of revolving around the datu has been sufficiently discredited by this time. While there are still traditional leaders appointed by the President let's say, Ali Dimapuro, president of MSU is probably more symbolic now than he ever was. Whatever bothers the Prime Minister of the sultans of Sulu is in the person of Abraham Rasul. The young and more aggressive leadership has to be taken over. In the case of the followers, there are a number of reasons why they are followers of one or another leader. But I think they are underestimating the extent to which they feel aggrieved, by the land being taken away from them by their being pushed to the hinterlands until there are no more hinterlands to go to. The Moro national comes in and takes a vast tract of land for a banana plantation or pineapple or whatever. If you just displace these people, where could they go? The Christian settlers, at one time or another, would push their weight around; sometimes they are owned by the government. When the army comes over to prevent the

enemy from re-entering a particular area, they would clear this area. Tens of thousands are still displaced. A fighting military necessity sometimes dictates to clear an area, meaning to say, remove the potential base of support for the Muslim leadership. So we just displace people. What would these people do? By analogy, this place of another fellow who has been my playmate here in Central Luzon is applicable. He said, "I don't even own the mat on which I sleep at night. What will I have to lose in the revolution?" Some others would say, "I'm used to the wheel of fortune." What do they have to lose? If they join, maybe when they wake up next morning they are a little higher as the wheel goes round and round. With the feeling of frustration, of not having any place, here comes the lure of the leader who says he will give you something. That's how every revolution works. I don't think everybody who joins knows the cause for which he is in there.

Prof. Aguilar: It appears that the Libyan intervention played the major role for the peace in Mindanao. With the establishment of this autonomous region, do you think it will also end Libyan intervention? to what extent?

Dr. Fernandez: It depends on how pervasive Nur Misuari is with Al Khadafi. Although I know if Khadafi will be satisfied, Nur will tell him that's what you asked for. But he (Khadafi) will tell him, "That's not what I want." There are other things which are equally important from our point of view. We have 80,000 workers, more or less, who are earning dollars in the Middle East. But we have to take certain things into account when we make decisions. We don't just turn left and right in abrupt manner. We are also eyeing developmental loans such as Kuwait gave us. So, this policy of friendship with the Arab countries although primarily intended to help us solve the immediate problems, is also aimed at other things. We need to diversify our sources of development funding; we need to export our labor; we need oil and oil is our number one economic problem. Gerry Sicat must have spent sleepless nights thinking about this problem of a very distorted and negative balance of trade and even balance of payment. Sometimes the press presents this balance of payment in such a confusing way. We think everything is alright because they say negative balance of trade but balance on the payment side. We only end up with this compensatory financing scheme whereby we borrow money for positive dollar reserves.

vis-a-vis. We must reduce that big oil bill which will be over \$1 billion by now. This explains our trade deficits which means that we really have to get oil at the lowest possible price offered by the People's Republic of China rather than go way out where freight will increase. We must develop our friendship with Saudi Arabia.

Director Morrell: On the question about whether Libya will stop its intervention, I have talked with many newsmen who have covered the Middle East situation while I was still in Zamboanga. Although we have the autonomous form of government, according to them, chances are Libya will not stop its intervention knowing Khadafi as they know him; he is even exporting revolution to Ireland where there are no Muslims. He would like to sponsor revolutions all over the world. That is his way of life.

The strategy of the Philippine government is to support the least moderate Islamic state in the Islamic conference to persuade and use their good influence with some of the more aggressive Islamic states to stop financing and making their own intervention because they are very fanatical in their own perception. So, this is why even if we have the autonomous form of government if you expect that Libya will stop the intervention, officially they may say yes, but indirectly they will find one way or another. That's why we have to be always on guard about this. (No less than Sadat called Khadafi and Khomeini as lunatics.) They even tried to finance the assassination of Sadat. If they tried to finance the assassination of Sadat, what more out here if he believes honestly, that we are trying to exterminate our brother Muslims? But nevertheless we are gaining grounds with the more moderate Islamic states.

Dr. Fernandez: Our President has, on many occasions, been repetitive on this point that we have no choice but to rely on this friendship of the Arab countries and to approach this Mindanao problem not through military force but by a policy of attraction. He has revealed, for instance, that at the height of the problem there, not too long after 1972 especially in 1973 and 1974, we did not have the military capability. We didn't have enough military equipment or manpower. He gathered the Foreign Policy Council together and got from them a recommendation to ask the U.S. for equipment. We will not ask the Americans to fight for us but we are begging for ammunition for civic action. The U.S. calmed us down. I have here with me the quote from the American spokesman who made it clear that any

fund for the Philippines was not intended to back up the Marcos regime nor to help him with the problem in the south. He made it clear that what the Americans did was for the benefit of the American interest, nothing more. We couldn't even ask the U.S. to help us. He made it plain that at the height of the negotiation, we cannot get the military hardware that we wanted. So, what choice did he have? I know it isn't in his character to lean over backwards the way he does.

Can you imagine all these foreign ministers from the Arab countries coming in? They want to see how we are dealing with our Muslim brothers. Have they bothered to consider that these leaders are still in the dark ages who cut off arms, bury people alive for relatively minor offenses? They tell us, "Let's see how you are treating our Muslim brothers over there." Why don't they ask themselves to perhaps return the compliments and tell them how to treat their own people? The President would sacrifice even national pride for the sake of having the problem settled. If we let that deteriorate and when we have a dismembered country, how would we feel about that? That's the problem. I think if we were stronger, richer, if we have more resources and strong armed forces, we wouldn't allow those indignities inflicted on us and tell this Arab world to go to hell. That's what they want, intervention in our purely internal affairs. By the way, the President has come close to that stand as of now. He is no longer content about these Islamic conferences. He says, "This is an internal problem, we will solve this our way." That is his latest stand. I don't know how far he will go with it. But he has a plan on how to deal with this problem. Maybe he senses that he has the military superiority by now over Misauri. But yet so far, on the eve of Islamic Conferences, and I have a listing of our yearly missions, even Romulo goes out there inspite of his age, to try to persuade Indonesia or Saudi Arabia and some other countries to help us with the problem at the Islamic Conference. But preceding the conference, both sides tried to show who is who in the south. Then, Islamic Conferences are always preceded by an escalation of the conflict in the south, to seek a better bargaining position because the conference has inevitably come down with the resolution saying that the government of the Philippines should take an earnest effort to dialogue with the MNLF for a political solution. It is already said that the Islamic conference recognizes the MNLF and only the MNLF can legitimately be a representative of Muslims in the south. So, that's how it is. If you were the President what would you do? I wonder.