

Where is this country going?

As one who was elected into the Senate on the ticket of the Liberal Party, perhaps I might be qualified within the limits of my capacity to describe my idea of where my country is going under this administration. We have one theme in this administration and it is not very different from the themes of the neighboring countries around us. We believe in one slogan—liberation.

To our south Indonesia has worried about the liberation of West Irian, and I want to tell you that—I haven't said this yet—that I myself personally feel that under the communique of the Bandung Conference the Philippines is committed to the Indonesian position on West Irian.

Of course, we may debate on the methods to be used for the achievement of this goal, but we are committed to the position of Indonesia.

We may also quarrel about the methods used in the liberation of Goa. But we were, because of our adherence to

an unequivocal position against colonialism, in favor of the position that the Goan situation should be resolved in accordance with the principle of self-determination.

We are for liberation. But you might ask us: what worlds are there for the Philippines to liberate? I shall prescind here from the rather interesting question of North Borneo. But I can assure you that we in the Philippines are thinking of liberating other things. We are thinking of liberating our own people.

Not long ago, there was a man who came to the Philippines, a very distinguished gentleman named Salvador de Madariaga, a Spanish intellectual who lives in exile in London. Before the Philippine Columbian he made one gem of a statement: a country may be the colony of its own government.

We believe that the Philippines has been for sometime a colony of its own government. Before the Spaniards came, our people lived in independent self-reliant settlements called *balangays*, where

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the people saw the effects of their contribution to their society in the trade that these colonies or settlements carried on with Japan, China, India and Cambodia and where the people also saw the effects of their contributions in the improvement of their own daily lives.

When the Spaniards came they brought us many things — good things. They brought us the faith in which most of us now believe. But they also brought us this — they gathered all the *balangays* together and centralized power in the capital city of Manila, marking the beginning of what our own hero Jose Rizal called the indolence of the Filipinos.

Rizal said the Filipinos was indolent not because he had no will but because he had no hope. For from the time our government was centralized for colonial purposes in Manila, the Filipinos continued to pay taxes and tributes, but this money came to Manila and was dispensed to them by the colonial government as it pleased and they

began to assume the role of beggars for the money they themselves had paid.

The Americans came, they gave us a large measure of self-government. They instituted elections down to the municipal level, but with the aid of the Filipino politicians of the time they continued the centralized form of government by which, although the people in the municipality were then given the power to vote, their tax money was still funneled to the capital, and if they desired something in their community to be done they still had to come to Manila to beg for that which was after all money from their own pockets.

In 1934, the American government gave us the opportunity to write our own constitution and perhaps effect our own liberation. Unfortunately, perhaps because our leaders were not yet of the enlightened thinking that is now prevalent in our country, the constitution perpetuated the colonial system in this country so that in spite of the fact that a man of our

abolished pork barrel. At least there is no pork barrel in the budget that he has proposed to Congress. What is the meaning of this?

Let me explain this by one example. One day not so long ago, a friend of mine told me that he had been to a picnic in a province very near here, only about 20 miles from Manila. They had to walk miles along rice paddies to the place where the picnic was to be held. When they arrived there he saw that there was a huge mango grove of many trees, and there were fruits on these trees and the fruits were rotting.

And this friend of mine asked his host, "Why don't you pick these fruits and take them to market?"

And the host was supposed to have answered, "How can I? You saw how we came here. We had to walk miles and miles and there are no roads on which to transport these mangoes to market. It would cost more to take them to market, so I let them rot."

"But," my friend insisted, "this is wealth! Why don't you build the road?"

His host said, "How can I build the road alone?"

"No," my friend said, "get help! Go to your congressman!"

"Ah!" the host said, "you know, this barrio made a mistake. We voted for the wrong man. He lost in the last elections. And the winner, he came to this barrio and the first thing he said was: as long as I am in power you will not get a single centavo of pork barrel in this barrio."

"Well," my friend said, "why don't you go to Malacañang?"

"But I have no pull in Malacañang."

"Well, why don't you gather the people together and make them build the road?"

"That is not the mentality of this barrio. We believe that it is the duty of the politicians to provide us with the pork barrel, and if we have voted for the wrong politician we just have to wait for the next elections."

That is pork barrel. It is a system which has worked more than any other part of our political traditions to hamper the economic development of this country.

What we are going to do is to see to it that taxes paid by the local people are retained by the local people so that the people may be able to use their own money for their own development.

In some ways, you may say, this is conservatism. Somebody
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dy said to me, "You know you sound just like Barry Goldwater, the American conservative."

And I said to him, "If this be conservatism, make the most of it. Because what is conservatism for an industrialized state like the United States could very well be radicalism for a country like the Philippines and the other countries of Asia, the self-reliance of whose individual people has been deadened by centuries of colonial government."

Indeed, in the United States, the advocates of welfare statism cry for government intervention on the grounds that there is too much ebullience of private initiative. The problem is the opposite in the Philippines, in India, Indonesia, Burma and Malaya. The problem in Asia and Latin America is not how to repress the effervescence of

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private initiative. It is how to awaken it and permit the genius of the individual citizen to contribute to the economy and political progress of the nation. I have seen this in Latin America. I have seen it in Asia. I see it in the Philippines. And I say that it is time perhaps for us, particularly for the formers of opinion, namely the distinguished gentlemen of the press, to think in terms of what we might call "A new statesmanship for Asia."

It is traditional that Asian and Latin American leaders think in terms of power in order to lead the people by this power on the path to progress. Perhaps it is time that the statesmen of Asia began to think of reducing their own power so that their leadership might be all the more effective.

I do not say that this is the absolute solution to all the

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ility in the economy."

But over and above all his specific proposals to solve our economic problems, he was always reverting at every turn to one favorite theme: "If we, Filipinos", he wrote, "are to arrive sooner and more effectively at the solutions of our

basic social and economic problems, we must learn to study, think, and work more, — we must think for ourselves, act by and for ourselves, and formulate and pursue our own independent aims and objectives as a free and democratic people."

problems of under-developed countries. I say, however, that this is a fundamental problem that we must begin to face squarely. And I invite our foreign friends to go back to their countries and think these thoughts. So that perhaps they might, in evaluating their own problems, think of cooperating with some of the new statesmen of the Philippines and beginning a program of leadership for this region that shall mean less power for the leaders and more power and more progress for the people.

When I was in India last year, to attend a conference in New Delhi, Mrs. Lakshmi Menon, the Undesecretary of Foreign Affairs, was the delegate to the conference, which was entitled "Asia Takes a Second Look at Democracy." She concluded her speech with a very telling anecdote, and I was very pleased at the time not only because it was very telling but also because it was a distinguished Hindu quoting an anecdote about a Catholic cathedral.

She said that at one time, there were several workers cutting stones in a public plaza in Paris.

A priest went down and, wanting to test the attitudes of the workers, approached one of them and he asked,

"What are you doing?"

The worker said, "Can't you see, Father, I am cutting stones."

The priest was not very happy about this answer, so he went down to the second worker and said "You, my good man, what are you doing?"

And this man said, "I have to eat, so I am earning a living."

Not very happy, he went down to the third man who was also cutting stones and asked this man, "You, my good man, what are you doing?" This man looked up at the priest, pride in his eyes, and said "Father, I am building a cathedral."

I think that, perhaps, when we can get every Asian to answer to such a question, "What are you doing?" to say not only that "I am planting rice," "I am preparing a brief" or "I am curing the sick" but to say also that "I am building my nation, I am building a great Asia," we shall at last be putting our region on the road to progress.

We can do this without the use of force, but by constitutional amendments and by the realization of the leaders that perhaps the time has come in Asia, in Latin America, in Africa for the leaders to determine for themselves, "How

long will military interregnum, how long will dictatorship, how long will pretense at democracy, how long will this last in the face of the onslaughts of organized Communism?"

It is time that we made the Asian choose not between one dictatorship and the Red dictatorship, but between real democracy and a Communist dictatorship. And the only people I can think of who can go back to their countries and initiate this are the people who belong to the fourth estate—the gentleman of the press.

You can go back to your countries and using the freedom of expression, tell your leaders what you have seen here. And if you find that there is any applicability of the modest steps that we are taking here to your situation, then I ask you: speak up, write. Be the moulders not only of public opinion but of leadership in Asia.

We are all very proud of our culture. Asian leaders, in every speech, will say that the culture of the Asian people is great.

Ask them this question:

"How much faith do you have in that culture; or do you have only faith in yourselves and in the accumulation of power? How much faith do you have in the ability of the Asian to make decisions for himself; or are you interested only in maintaining yourselves in power so that you might make your own decisions, whether they are right or wrong, for the people of Asia?"

If you do this, you will be doing us a favor because we who believe in this faith—faith in the individual Asian—feel that it is a program that deserves the understanding and the study of other people. We have a lot to learn from India, a lot to learn from Pakistan, Indonesia, Malaya, from Japan and China and Korea. If you feel that you would like to take something home from the Philippines tell your people this: that we have started a new era in which we are placing faith in the individual citizen as superior to faith in the individual leaders.

This is where this country is going.

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