

Difficulties of a Firm Policy in Sulu

When a band of Sulu brigands sniped a constabulary patrol in August and Governor-General Frank Murphy began investigating the Sulu problem, announcing his intention to have a firm policy there, John Hackett of the *Mindanao Herald* construed the governor's statement to mean a policy of blood and iron. When Governor Murphy was asked about this, he said he had no blood and iron policy in mind—far from it. He meant, by a firm policy, one under which Moros would have justice and the law and its agents would be respected. Effecting such a policy may involve changes in the personnel of the Sulu government. Not every good man is able to govern Sulu well. Whoever governs here will do best when it is definitely known that James Fugate is or is not to go back there as governor.

Sulus are natural intriguers. While many Sulu leaders are said to have given their word to Fugate that they would support his successor, there is undoubtedly temptation among them to make the way of his successor hard and create the impression that his return to Sulu is badly needed. Supporting this is the fact that he made a good Sulu governor. If he is to go back there it should be announced; if he is not, that too should be made known. In any case, Sulu needs a permanent governor able to build up moral backing for his administration among the Sulus.

The type of governor needed is a man fit to cope with raw border conditions; in short, a man of shrewd and cunning courage. A man merely honest is easily found, an honest man who is also cunning is a rarer combination. He will be dealing every day with intrigues, he must frustrate them with intrigues of his own. That is the job at Sulu. The archipelago is rife with factions, the job is to play them off against each other and push ahead with education and public improvements; it has been found that Sulus will settle in peaceful communities where roads give contact with the public authorities and access to markets.

A drawback in Sulu, in Lanso and the other Mohammedan communities, is nonrecognition of customary law. This is true of land law especially. The statutory law affecting land, applied everywhere in the islands, recognizes private ownership of land. Sulu law does not recognize private ownership of land at all, but holds it immoral; so the law is in conflict with custom and its enforcement gives rise to rancor and feuds. You might issue title papers enough on land to cover it with foolscap, still a Sulu would not feel bounden to respect those title papers: the practice is foreign to his law and his tribal customs. Such things provoke continual conflicts, it can't be otherwise until Sulus are brought by education and practice to discard their tribal view of property in land and adopt the doctrine of private ownership.

Or the government might let Sulu law prevail in Sulu where it is not in conflict with what is right. Essentially the problem is one of mutual adjustments. It is to be worked out among a people who are naturally suspicious and natural dissemblers, so it is no easy problem. Charles E. Yeater gave it into the hands of Carl M. Moore, who managed it well. Colonel Henry L. Stimson gave it into the hands of James Fugate, who also managed it well. But undoubtedly, now, there is a "Moore" party in Sulu, as well as a "Fugate" party; there are also factions for and against Sultan-Senator Hamalul Kiram. Every successful governor unwittingly makes his successor's lot the harder, the factions try him out like country yokels try out new teachers: it is literally such a problem in big-boyishness. In ten years progress will have been made with it, because there will be more roads, schools, farms and settled places. But outwardly it will be just the same, and in 50 years just the same.

Nor will it ever be more than a very minor problem. It only affects about 70,000 people on a small and isolated archipelago. To govern these 70,000 folk justly and firmly, as Governor Murphy rightly wants them governed, is a thankless small-pay job for that competent man who can at times be found, who likes doing thankless and stubborn work that needs doing.

Sulu's Size-Up of Sulu Governors

JAMES FUGATE

Held Sulu leaders personally responsible for peace in their districts, pledging them to keep the constabulary from interfering so long as they kept faith with the government.

Cut yearly government expenses \$7,000.

Fought cattle-rustling, prosecuting buyers of stolen cattle. Reported corrupt officials, getting them dismissed from the public service. Secured return of 800 stolen cattle to their owners.

Induced Sulus to take up farming, which they began doing so actively that in 1930 Sulu exported rice, for the first time in Sulu's history.

Inaugurated a movement for Sulus to turn in their cutting weapons, persuading the leaders that constant carrying of these deadly weapons was a fertile source of crimes—among young men especially. This movement was underway when Fugate's health failed and he went on leave.

Restrained the constabulary from provocative activities, practically limiting their patrols to practice marches.

Promoted Sulu's general advancement, and gained by a sympathetic attitude Sulu men's support.

GUY N. ROHRER

First American governor of Sulu, under whom many bloody conflicts took place in one of which Lieutenant Ward and 3 of his men were killed by Sulus who made away with their rifles.

P. D. ROGERS

Second American governor, killings continued under Rogers as they had under Rohrer. Lieutenant Laltoche and some of his men were killed. Lieutenant Coscolluela arrested Sulus without edulas, is reported to have executed 4 and to have burned their bodies. Lieutenant Olivas had his men fire upon a mosque while Sulus were at worship in it. Rogers used the constabulary at Pata island, where children were not being sent to school, and 17 men, women and children were killed. Many other killings occurred.

CARL M. MOORE

Third American governor, Moore practiced swift retaliation upon Sulus who attacked peace officers. In his first year Sulus killed Lieutenant Velasquez and 5 of his men, taking 3 rifles. The out-laws fortified themselves, more than 100 men, women and children paid the price of breaking the peace.

In a clash on Pata island, 200 men, women and children were killed.

At Kulai Kulai Look 17 Sulus were killed by the constabulary under Lieutenant Littava.

Datu Tahil's fortification was stormed when that third-member of the Sulu provincial board essayed armed rebellion, about 100 men, women and children were killed and Tahil sent to Bilibid, where he is still doing time; although he, his position stormed, turned and fled and had to be captured later.

At South Ubian island 6 constabulary soldiers were killed, and 17 Sulus on the other side.

AND NOW

Armed conflicts have reappeared. Local leaders are losing faith in the government's asserted interest in the Sulu's welfare. Constabulary officers are appointed deputy governors of districts. Cattle rustling has revived, and our Sulu informant claims more than 3,000 stolen cattle have been handled through Jolo buyers and sold at Manila.

These data are extracted from an information filed by a Sulu and are published to show how this man's opinion compares the various Sulu administrations since civil government was established over Sulu under the Jones law. They show this Sulu, a man of influence, to believe James Fugate's administration by far the best of the lot; they indicate that Fugate's return to Jolo would reestablish a government there the Sulus would support.—Ed.