

CRIMINALITY AMONG YOUNG FILIPINOS

A few days ago, newspapers reported in screaming headlines the tragic killing of Joselito Zuzuarragi, 17-year-old scion of a real estate magnate in Quezon City. The victim, a high school student at the Lyceum of the Philippines, was allegedly pistol-whipped and gunned down by 19-year old Gregorio "Butch" Belgica, himself the scion of a prominent banker. What made the killing more tragic however is that the victim and the alleged gunwielder were both young men, not past their twenties and the senselessness of the motive that led to the killing.

Belgica, it seems, had suspected Zuzuarragi of being among those who mauled him in a Roxas Boulevard nightspot sometime ago. From then on, he had harbored bad feelings against Zuzuarragi, and his friends

that finally resulted in the latter's death.

Yet, Belgica is but one of the many wayward youths, who have in recent years, acquired some sort of notoriety. There was Boy Porcuna, who before he too was gunned down by a rival gang, was a notorious underworld character. In Belgica's case, how he managed to stay out of jail despite the string of cases against him in courts is still a puzzle to most citizens.

Even girls, surprisingly, are increasingly involved in crimes — an alarming manifestation of the growing "wildness" that is gripping our young people today.

In Bacolod, for instance, ten persons, including three girls, were accused of murder before the local city court. All were members of the dreaded "Manong Gang" in that city which police authorities said was responsible for the murder of Celso

Tan. A radio commentator, Tan had denounced the activities of the gang over the airplanes. This incurred the gang's ire and last May 1, in the presence of his wife Tan was shot. The murder scene, a mere fifteen meters away from a police station, showed how bold the youthful criminals were.

When these wayward youths do not kill, they commit other crimes and mischiefs. Still in Quezon city, four unidentified teenagers reportedly raped a 15-year-old girl inside the Kamuning Elementary school. The girl, news accounts said, had just come from the Kamuning Theater when the four accosted her and brought her to the school where she was abused.

Also in Quezon city, operatives of the local CRUSAC (Crusade Against Crime) arrested several drunken teenagers who have been molesting girls when they come out of school at night. These teenagers, it is said, would scamper away and disappear when the girls shout for help. The discovery of their cave hideout near a creek finally led to their arrest.

Indeed there seems to be an increase of teenage crime and hooliganism all over the country. In Pasay city, Mrs. Leonor Muñoz, principal of the Jose Rizal Elementary school in that city decried the rash of mischiefs done to her school by teenage gangsters living near the premises of the school. These teenage gangsters were reportedly destroying plants, equipments and even painting the walls with unprintable remarks.

Of late, wayward girls have also figured prominently in police blotters. Some, for no reason than plain boredom, leave their homes "in search of adventure." There was that daughter of a well-to-do family who fled from her home because she had nothing to do. When found, she was working as a waitress in an Olongapo bar. Yet, she did not even display the slightest sign of remorse when confronted by her parents.

A 13-year-old lass from Bulacan also disappeared but for another reason. Her father had scolded her when he found out that she was pregnant and to a married man.

Never indeed have our young people been as "wild" as they are now. Rebellious, they leave their homes for no apparent reason. Or else, they hang around and get involved in all sorts of crimes and mischief. Gangs are formed and their rivalries often lead to senseless killings and brawls.

Who is to blame for all these? Authorities, seemingly helpless to cope with the situation, point to such factors as poor family upbringing and the corroding influence of the radio, television and the cinema.

Yet, "merely blaming parents" a local daily editorialized, "the school, or church, the environmental factor which used to suffice as an explanation for youthful crimes, has lost its former meaning. Some of the most vicious forms of youthful crimes today are committed by teenagers who have had all the advantages that a young person could hope for or that any parent could wish for his offspring.

The ultimate blame, the editorial continued, lies in the inadequacies of the law in dealing with habitual of-

fenders. The suspect in the above-mentioned killing (referring to the Belgica case) has been charged before in at least ten criminal cases ranging from assault to murder. All these cases are still pending except one in which he was convicted of homicide and which is now on appeal.

Obviously, the daily believes the rise of teenage crimes is due to the leniency of our courts.

Ordinarily, the wisest, most criminal-conscious teenagers should come from poor families. It is not often the case however. Scions of rich, prominent families are more often equated with teenage crimes and hooliganism. Why?

Writing in the Reader's Digest, Geoffrey Lucy offers a plausible explanation. Short working hours, he said, give more leisure, and even adults have not learned to use it. Better nourishment means earlier puberty, resulting in adult sexuality in children immaturity. Longer dependence on parents because of the need for higher education, boys explode into violence to prove that they

are grown-up. Some, unable to succeed in school with today's higher academic requirements, seek status through hooliganism. Youngsters can afford to buy mobility, and in towns distant from their homes, they feel free to behave more boldly in front of their neighbors.

Whatever maybe the reason for the upsurge of teenage crimes, one fact stands out. The situation has reached alarming proportions that may get out of hand unless something is done — and fast! — *By David B. Ramos in Manila Bulletin.*

PROCRASTINATION

Procrastination is the thief of time; year after years it steals, till all are fled, and to the mercies of a moment leaves the vast concern of an eternal state. At thirty, man suspects himself a fool; knows it at forty, and reforms his plan; at fifty chides his infamous delay, pushes his prudent purpose to resolve; in all the magnanimity of thought, resolves, and re-resolves, then dies the same. — *Young.*