

- To be known as a Filipino nation, independent, friendly, and cooperative, the Philippines needs policy makers who are resolved to follow their own definite norms of conduct.

A WORD ON PHILIPPINE ORIENTAL POLICY

The foreign policy of a country should be predicated on its national interests and actual needs. These should serve as general but concrete terms of reference in the formulation of any agreement and understanding with any particular foreign state in any part of the world.

In our relations and dealings with what is generally known as Asia, we need to remember that this huge continent cannot be treated as one single group of political and cultural communities bound together by ideas and beliefs founded on basically similar historical and spiritual sources as is the Western state system. The Oriental or Asiatic world rests to a great extent on a wide variety of economic and social conditions at different stages of development, arising from different historical traditions and different conceptions of

cultural and moral values. After the last War, however, Western influences have begun to enter their life in a gradual way insinuating themselves, as it were, through a newly woven fabric of suspicious nationalism.

Moreover, the problems arising from the conditions prevalent in Oriental countries are in such a state of flux and uncertainty that it is not always easy to foresee and anticipate possible solutions. The resulting instability that prevails should warn policy-makers against arrangement of a permanent character or against assumptions from rigid frames of reference on particular problems and relationships. These observations are backed up by what have been explained by competent writers on the subject. As one of them said: "Policy makers do not have the benefit of a

crystal ball." Sukarno, the so-called adored champion of Indonesia's independence and so chosen as his nation's President for life, did not remain long as ruler and policy-maker. He and his policies and methods met an inglorious end in a few brief years from the viewpoint of history. The collapse was almost unexpected. At this moment Nasser of Egypt, which is in fact an Afro-Oriental country, is reported to have fallen down and with him his "crush-Israel" policy is going to pieces in spite of the much vaunted Arab unity.

A definite long-term policy can easily be nullified by the uncertainties of unstable conditions. The wise thing for the Philippine Republic to do would be to draw up and observe certain general postulates based on careful observations derived from events currently happening in our environment and from the experience of persons known by their ability to grasp the meaning of international decisions and trends with objectivity and keen perceptiveness. Postulates so

produced may serve as guidelines for the formulation of specific policies when particular problems between this country and a particular Asian nation should call for discussion, counsel, and consensus. In other words, such general postulates should stand as relatively basic referents for and at those moments or occasions which call for special arrangements with any particular Asian government.

Living in the Orient as we are, we should keep ourselves intelligently and fully informed about Oriental affairs. More than that: we need to assess the importance of their actual and possible impact on our country's problems today and tomorrow. To be ever aware of these conditions and influences is the only way that would enable us to adopt a specific policy at the proper occasion that could best promote our national interests.

These words may sound like platitudes to maturer observers and students of international relations and problems; but in view of our limited experience in the

conduct of international relations they are worth repeating as constant reminders of the need for alertness in our association with other governments and of the value of being well-informed of the atmosphere and environment in which our country is being enveloped in many ways.

A general Asian policy of this country that takes into account the foregoing considerations may be properly formulated and may be expected to be seriously respected when it is based upon a positive proposition (1) that would convince our fellow Orientals that we are, in fact and in theory an independent and sovereign nation; (2) that would show our fellow Orientals that we have the will and the potential strength to make ourselves a fully developed nation with readiness and decision to stand on our own feet; (3) that would assure every country in Asia by word and deed that we are one of them — Oriental or Asian, not Occidental or American, or European, nor African; (4) that would express our

readiness to cooperate with them in ways that will promote a more peaceful, progressive, and prosperous existence not only with our fellow Orientals but with the whole world that is getting smaller, more and more interdependent, but also more and more exposed to incredible but nonetheless existing dangers to nations and to humanity itself; and (5) that would respect each and every country's cultural, social, economic, and political patterns and problems and would avoid interfering with them or with any decisions involving them unless assistance and support are mutually sought and agreed upon.

To one who closely observes the attitude of foreign delegates in international conferences toward the Philippines in certain matters, it seems quite obvious that these basic propositions cry for an open and sincere recognition in all the Orient, if not in the entire world. For whether we like it or not, many Asians and Europeans still entertain doubts about the Philippines being

an independent country and not an American appendage; and many still think that this country does not belong to Southeast Asia inasmuch as its interests have not been distinctly associated with those of Southeast Asian countries in any marked degree. In fact British and European books as of now seldom if ever refer to the Philippines as belonging to the Southeast Asian community.

It is not advisable to take for granted the postulates suggested above. In the early years of the government of the United States of America, the stand taken by its policy-makers was based on similar principles in their dealings with European states. While conditions here and now are not exactly identical with those then and there obtaining, the basic aim and purpose of these foreign policy principles are not dissimilar, namely, that we make our own independent policy decisions, that they be predicated on what we believe to be for the best interests of our nation, and that in such grave questions

as non-involvement or involvement in international affairs we should make our own firm decision based on our free choice and within the framework of our Constitution.

As a general summation for what might be safely declared to be a broad foreign policy of the Philippines, it should be sincerely affirmed that the Philippines is proud of her place in the Orient and of her own particular national identity and that, without in any way interfering with the internal affairs and institutions of other Oriental nations, it is her avowed policy to live with them in harmony as a good neighbor who is ready to do her part in promoting the common interests of all peoples in order to establish permanently a peaceful, progressive, and prosperous world community.

Needless to add that the broad postulates of foreign policy discussed here are just as proper and applicable in the political relations of the Philippine Republic with Western countries as with the Oriental states. To pro-

tect and advance peacefully the national interest of the Filipino nation and to promote and maintain its national identity are basic considerations in both our domestic and foreign policy. — V. G. S.

LORD ACTON'S MAXIMS

The Reign of Sin is more universal, the influence of unconscious error is less, than historians tell us. Good and evil lie close together. Seek no artistic unity in character.

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The final judgment depends on the worst action.

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Character is tested by true sentiments more than by conduct. A man is seldom better than his word.

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History is better written from letters than from histories; let a man criminate himself.

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No public character has ever stood the revelation of private utterance and correspondence.

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Be prepared to find that the best refute gives way under closer scrutiny. — *By Lord Acton in Essays on Freedom and Power.*