

OVERSTAYING ALIENS***Expose Modus Operandi***

A total of 239 temporary visitors, all Chinese nationals, have left the Philippines since July 31 as a result of the stepped up drive launched by the Bureau of Immigration to enforce the law on overstaying transient aliens.

The last group of the number specified left yesterday on the instance of immigration officials who went out of their way to secure travel accommodations for the departing foreign visitors.

Lamberto Almada, chief of the BI's intelligence division, said the overstaying aliens were prevailed upon to leave under pain of forfeiture of their cash bonds which ranged from P2,000 (ordinary temporary visitors) to P10,000 (cabinet policy visitors) each. Ordinary temporary visitors are visiting foreigners with permits to stay limited to 59 days, while cabinet policy visitors are permitted to stay at least three months.

Cash bonds of transient aliens, Immigration Commissioner Edmundo Reyes said, may be forfeited for overstaying and for other violations of local laws governing the temporary stay of foreign visitors here.

In the face of strong denunciations from certain quarters, particularly politicians with vested interests, Commissioner Reyes ordered the revocation of the permits or extensions of stay of foreigners who were held liable for violations of the provisions of the Immigration Act of 1940 (C.A. 613), as amended. Reyes was earlier denounced for alleged abuse of authority in revoking permits which he had previously approved.

Upon inquiry, however, it was learned that the action of Reyes was in order. As Immigration Commissioner, it is within his discretion to either authorize or refuse the stay of temporary foreign visitors.

As a matter of fact, Commissioner Reyes has been lenient with visiting foreign nationals. Most foreigners who initially entered the country for a brief stopover were allowed to take advantage of the maximum staying time, beyond the 72-hour

limit given to aliens enroute to other countries.

While most foreign visitors were found to be law-abiding, there are a few who abuse the liberality of the immigration law, Reyes disclosed. One case in point is that of a number of Chinese nationals who were scheduled to leave on the last week of July last year, in accordance with the law, but who had stayed a full one year in the Philippines.

In the process of tracking down the Chinese overstayers, who continually changed addresses without informing the Bureau of Immigration beforehand, indeed a *modus operandi* adopted by deliberate evaders of immigration laws, NBI investigators said, immigration authorities have authenticated a conspiracy to help foreign visitors stay in the country illegally.

The procedure is for temporary visitors to enter the country ostensibly for a brief sojourn, and to leave the islands as soon as their time is up. Once in the country, however, they seek out kin and friends who are usually well-established merchants or businessmen with connections who intercede in behalf of the visitors. Bribing their way through official channels, including certain unscrupulous politicians, the visitors succeed in either converting their permits to something more permanent in status, or in extending their permits indefinitely.

Many of those who have succeeded thus far were observed to have found gainful employment, which is frowned upon by law in the case of transients, or had committed crimes and other violations of the Immigration Act.

The problem posed by aliens seeking roots here is one of the objects of intensive studies being conducted by the Constitutional Convention for the purpose of instituting corrective measures.

Meanwhile, the seizure of cash bonds of overstaying temporary visitors and transit passengers is one way of discouraging illegal entry, the Bureau of Immigration said.