

■ This article is a strong presentation of the worsening condition of the Philippines.

THE COMING COLLAPSE OF FILIPINO SOCIETY

It has become necessary to ask questions. The reason is not that there are no more subjects to write on or that there are no more happenings worthy of comment: the reason is that Philippine society has so deteriorated that the tranquilizing answers are no longer availing.

The situation that I speak of involves not only the fragmentation of once accepted values but also the all but total destruction of many of our cherished institutions. That pristine time when everything dirty used to be associated only with such agencies as the customs and the internal revenue is no more.

For today, dirt is found everywhere. Indeed, it has become so that the readers of newspapers have long ceased to look at the professional criminals for the authorship of murders and robberies but to the policemen,

the members of the uninformed gentry, who are paid by the people to uphold the law and maintain the peace.

If those whose duty is to provide the rest of the population with security have become the enemies of the people, where will the people find the protection they need to survive?

On the surface, Philippine society has all the instruments and all the means with which to carve out order and security. It is supposed to be governed by laws not by men; it has law-enforcing agencies and prosecutors whose duty is to mobilize the resources of the state for the protection of the man in the street; it has judges who know the law and who can derive from it the legal justification for meting out such penalties as the guilty deserve; and above all, it is blessed with a free press which has always been

raising its collective voice against venality and the abuses of power.

But the vital question still is: why is it that the Filipinos are in a worse situation today than they were, say, 10 years ago? Why is it that despite all the unrestrained revelations in the columns of the press and all the denunciations disseminated through radio and television, no cause-and-effect relationship can be established between what has been exposed and a consequent action?

Why is it that the untrammelled exercise of so sacred and so necessary a right as freedom of speech and press has not produced the salutary results that it has produced in democratic societies? Is it because the various forms of mass media have been so affected by the general decay that they have become ineffectual? Is it because, to use the language of mass communications, intelligent Filipinos have also become the victims of a dysfunctional press and television?

This question is important for the reason that a dysfunctional press and tele-

vision — dysfunctional in the sense that having been burdened by reports of corrupt acts and practices, from thievery to embezzlement, they have produced in the Filipino a feeling of surfeit which amounts to a feeling of senseless indifference — are worse than useless.

What might have happened is that the reader of the newspaper which is bursting with news of official and private corruption develops his own alienation from the unpleasant scenery and seeks an illusory refuge either in his cynicism or in his supposed moral rectitude.

What is worse is that the urgent need of the rest of the population which is composed of common people and whose one consuming ambition is to have three meals a day and a little something for the uplift of offsprings has rendered them inert.

It is no wonder, then, that political leaders and government officials have learned to feel safe in their periodic raids on the public till. For they know that whatever animosity they arouse among the masses is more the re-

sult of envy than of moral outrage.

And so, the people go to the polls to vote for a change in administration, not for a change in the structure of society, in the forlorn hope that sooner or later the chaos will produce a leader capable of providing a direction to their drab lives.

But what will happen when the leader fails to appear? What will happen when, in the alternation of administrations, the incidence of venality increases and the refinements of accu-

mulating unearned profits rather than the refinements of the governmental process develop? Finally, what will happen when the Filipino in the mass, his patience of a carabao exhausted, loses hope but retains his will to survive?

The only warning I can serve is that there might not be time enough to go to the airport for that sanctuary in the States or in Switzerland where the stashed dollars can be enjoyed. — *I. P. Soliongco, Manila Chronicle September 19, 1968*

CLARITY

Make a point never so clear, and it is great odds that a man whose habits, and the bent of whose mind lie a contrary way shall be unable to comprehend it; — so weak a thing is reason in competition with inclination. — *Bp. Berkeley.*