

# The NEW ORDER and the FILIPINO WOMAN

By FEDERICO MANGAHAS

IT is not very clear to me why I am asked to explain the meaning of the New Order to the women of the Philippines. This is not to say that I am complaining. It is merely to provide against any possible protest on the part of the women on my apparent presumption to explain something to them with respect to a subject that is not my special field and in respect of an audience on whom I claim no special authority.

But at any rate I do feel I have something to say about the New Order and I don't mind annoying the women with a little intellectual exercise. The latter is a familiar exercise, even if the former does seem a bit precipitate for most people who couldn't before endure the very thought of rubbing elbows with the lower orders in a street car.

## *Visionary*

As a writer of considerable notoriety, I had indulged not infrequently long before December 8, 1941, in elaborating on a coming social order and on that account I had often been considered suspect, especially by businessmen and the politicians whom they maintained in authority. And what was the reason? Well, in the matter of workers, I liked them to get decent wages, to work in healthy surroundings, to be provided with decent housing, to be allowed opportunities for recreation and rejuvenation—all as proper incentives for work. In the matter of businessmen, themselves, I liked them to be less greedy, less suspicious of human nature especially among the lower classes, less unctuous and less ostentatious about their conscience charities, and less conspicuous in their consumption of ill-gotten gains and glory. In the matter of women, I liked them to be more charitable, to be less ambitious for the front page, to be less articulate about their rights and more conscientious about their obligations. In the matter of politicians, I like them to have less brass, to be less afraid of intelligence, to make fewer promises, to bargain less, to plan more, and to push towards objectives not because their names are blazoned thereabouts but because the coming children of nameless men and women will enjoy better opportunities for fulfilling their talents. In the matter of culture, I liked intellectual leaders to go into



the past not for corpses and carcasses, but for the imperishable substance of traditions which constitutes the nourishing blood of a living civilization; I liked them to live with the present on the basis of a dynamic past; I liked them to see the future as a challenge to their capacity to contribute to the structure and architecture of an order worthy of man and his increasing stature.

## *Shift in Emphasis*

CAN the woman take in all these? I shall not make any claim for their loves. I shall be content to speculate on the basis of certain changes wrought in their outlook and behaviour since the outbreak of the Greater East Asia War and the subsequent oc-

cupation of the Philippines by the Imperial Japanese Forces. The Japanese occupation of the Philippines which ushered in the New Order has definitely meant a number of things to the Filipinos, especially to the women. These things are what I would like to consider the meaning of the New Order to the women of this country.

To be sure, the new order has radically shifted the emphasis from frivolity to work. There are still women who may be sufficiently well-provided to dismiss the inconveniences of the present situation with a careless shrug and keep on playing panguinge with the neighbors, giving sumptuous parties, or spending sixty per cent of their time with the beautician. They are the exceptions rather than the rule. The most light-minded women, since the war, have learned to work, have learned to be ashamed of social uselessness, have taken up occupations not necessarily to stretch a penny but to contribute to the common store of service to their fellow citizens stricken by the war in one way or another. I daresay they are happier for the change.

It may not have completely penetrated into the heads of all the women but the new order rendered certain established ideas definitely absurd not to say ridiculous. It is not likely today that a bureau director would compel his subordinates under pain of demotion or dismissal to allow part of their salaries as contributions to a common fund to pay for tickets to elect his daughter in a school or newspaper beauty contest. And it would be really absurd for any

young Filipino woman to allow herself to thus become an instrument of official oppression just to gratify a father's vanity or her penchant for exhibition. It is simply no longer a part of the New Order.

### ***Myth of Deification***

It used to be the pride of the Filipino woman to believe in the myth of deification for herself in private and public life. She liked to think of being on a pedestal as an object of stupid worship. Well, the New Order has somehow forced that nonsense out of her, or should, if it has not yet done so. The Filipino woman must work—as she has no doubt done so even before—and must be a suitable comrade to a man, rather than a capricious, corrupting mistress, in the construction of a New Philippines. The Filipino woman can remain a queen not by insisting on a pedestal but by sharing equally the burden and responsibility of her man not only for survival but for fulfillment of their community's common aspiration towards material self-sufficiency and moral self-respect.

In the campaign for equal political rights with men under an older regime, there was altogether too loud a clamor for her rights, along with the enjoyment of older privileges exclusive to the women by virtue of their sex. They wanted the vote and yet expected precedence in every sphere of life—a seat in a street car ahead of any man however old or decrepit—special tolerance and indulgence in an even contest however inferior she might be in ability, intelligence and enterprise to men competitors. She takes all these things for granted as hers by the order of nature or of God. She did not consider it honorable and necessary to work for them, let alone to be grateful for them, in order to deserve them. She liked the folklore of chivalry because it operated so much to her advantage. Now the new order revised

all that and at times with little or no ceremony. And it is to the good. The Filipino woman, if she is to continue being entitled to respect, must learn to work and to be grateful.

### ***Liquidation and Recovery***

In the days when it was easy to amass a fortune by official graft or by business and industrial exploitation, and flaunt the latest word in motor cars as symbol of material power and social success, certain of our women so favored were persuaded that no other scheme of life was tenable, no other order in which self-respect is the consequence of honest enterprise, ability and decent labor. All their arts of coquetry were concentrated on how to inspire their men to get rich quick by hook or by crook. As they flourished, we were beginning to see a new race of selfish, parasitic, expensive women and corrupt, ruthless, exploitative men as rulers of our society. The New Order is bound to liquidate them if we are to recover the pristine character of our race and build a nation worthy to survive and to take its place among the free nations of the world.

**O**UR women in the checkered history of our nation have known work, comradeship, gratitude, sacrifice, creativeness, self-respect. We can have all these again and in greater measure according as we allow the new order to recreate us along the sane and healthy outlines of our people's character when life was harsh to us and we were not afraid to take its severe teaching. Let us hope that the severe realities of the New Order as it is being established among us will succeed to inspire us with the uncompromising but enduring message. Thus only may we look forward to achieving a social order of peace, truth and beauty. So much depends on the Filipino woman.

