

MUSLIM MISSION

First-hand look at Mindanao



World Muslim League delegation calls on President Marcos at Malacañang

Members of a fact-finding mission from the World Muslim League have seen for themselves the conditions obtaining in Mindanao and are convinced of the sincerity of government efforts to improve the lot of Muslim Filipinos.

The mission, headed by Datu Syed Ibrahim Alsagof, reported their impressions to President Marcos after visiting the country's second largest island last week.

They observed at close range the development program now being undertaken in Mindanao. They talked extensively not only with government officials but with Muslim leaders and plain citizens.

The Muslims spoke highly of the President's concern for their welfare, the mission members reported.

The visit was an offshoot of the Muslim World League conference held in Benghazi, Libya, last March. During that conference, Libya introduced a resolution condemning the Philippines for alleged extermination of the Muslims in Mindanao. But the delegations from Indonesia, Malaysia, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia succeeded in blunting the Libyan move and persuaded the conference to send a fact-finding mission to the Philippines instead. Philippine Ambassador Yusuf Abubakar, himself a Muslim, also explained at the conference the government's efforts to resolve the Mindanao problem, including the massive infusion of funds for the socio-economic development of the area.

When the mission arrived in Manila, the President welcomed them in Mala-

cañang, the presidential residence, and assured them that the Philippines was exhausting all means to integrate the Filipino Muslim population into the country's political and economic mainstream. He appealed for their cooperation in effecting assimilation and asked them what they could do to help strengthen Muslim-Christian relations.

"I am very happy you are here and I hope you will help us cure this illness in the hearts of our people, this anger, this bitterness and this impatience," the President said. Both the government and the military, the President added, were dealing with the problem with "patience and understanding."

The mission also included Mohammed Asad Shahab, Jamal Miyan and Mohammed Almontasar Alkittani. They were accompanied by Saudi Arabian Ambassador Aquil Mohammed Aquil and Mohammed Raya Miri, attache.

In his talk with the mission, the President explained what the government had been doing to uplift the conditions of the Muslims. He pointed out that:

- The government had increased the number of Muslim scholars in colleges and universities from 2,000 to 4,000.
- He had instructed the University of the Philippines to set up a center for Islamic studies.
- The government had set aside extensive areas of public lands in Mindanao for distribution to landless Muslims and that titles to disputed lands were being clarified so these would no longer be a cause of trouble in the area.
- Many of the provinces in Mindanao have Muslim governors, congressmen, and mayors although there are numerous Christians residing in these areas.
- Wherever possible, Christian mili-

tary officers are withdrawn and replaced with Muslims, while in other areas, one Muslim officer or enlisted man is assigned for every Christian in the unit.

On the same occasion, Executive Secretary Alejandro Melchor, overall coordinator of the Mindanao program, gave the details of the implementation of the infrastructure and economic development projects for Mindanao. Among these are the construction of road networks throughout the island, development of airports and piers, grant of liberal government loans to farmers and fishermen, permission for a limited resumption of barter trade in the Sulu-Zamboanga-Basilan area, the use of Arabic in the government's information and education programs and the continuing "policy of attraction" to misguided elements.

During the delegation's visit, the President extended, for the second time in four months, deadline on amnesty granted to those who had committed certain acts punishable under the Revised Penal Code. The extension covered several Mindanao provinces. Also extended was the amnesty for violators of the anti-subversion law.

The deadline for the amnesty, granted under Presidential Decree No. 95, was originally set on Feb. 23. This was later extended to March 15 and again to July 15. Thus far, more than 600 persons in Mindanao have availed themselves of this amnesty.

This was the second time since last year that the Muslim world had sent a mission to Mindanao. The first was in July, 1972. The mission, composed of diplomats from Arab countries, was dispatched to investigate Eloya's charge that the Philippines was waging a genocidal war against the Muslims. The delegation made an on-the-spot survey and left convinced that the problem was basically the result of age-old economic and land disputes.

THE PRESIDENT SPEAKS

An ideology of development

Excerpts from the President's keynote address at a symposium on development, sponsored by the Department of Public Information, Maharlika Hall, Malacañang, on June 3, eve of Philippine Independence Day:

The first phase of any revolution is stability. Development follows.

The strategy for development I have mapped out. The priorities are clear. While we aim at the balanced agro-industrial economy, we attend first to agriculture. There is a world shortage of agricultural products. Not only cereals or staples but abaca and sugar are in short supply. So our strategy is confirmed by the anxieties of the world. We develop our industry but reemphasize agriculture.

I have often said that if I am asked what would be the answer to our problems, the answer would be production. If every man, woman or child produced some product or service, then the country would be prosperous.

It sounds simple but this is in truth the entire meaning and purpose of development.

The purpose or objective, strategy

and mechanics having been clarified, let me speak of the Ideology of Development.

The subject of this symposium is one which exercises the intellectual and moral energies of men in this century. There is no people in the world today, whether rich or poor, that is unconcerned with the grand issue of development. And it is not by accident that the United Nations has declared the Seventies the "Second Development Decade."

The approach to development is what separates the rich from the poor peoples of the world. For the rich, the problem, is how to realize the promise of abundance, how to improve "the quality of life." What certain Western intellectuals call Consciousness III reveals the serious thought that utopianism is no longer impracticable in post-industrial, or super-rich, societies. But for the poor peoples, who comprise two-thirds of humanity, the development experience translates itself in terms of survival and sheer existence; it has yet to be perceived in the radical humanist concepts of the industrialized world.



The President delivering keynote address at symposium on development.

Development, of course, is a process that occurs in conditions as we find them, and not as we want them to be. We have to achieve material advancement within the context of the world political economy, under orientations and conditions established by the revolution in communication. In sum, we exercise our human will and reason, we pursue our goals, under the pitiless scrutiny of what Macluhan calls "the global village." This radically influences the acts of the poor peoples of the world, a burden which the present rich peoples did not have to bear in a similar stage of their development.

And there is, above all, the overwhelming pressure of ideologies—ideologies which are not indigenous—passing severe judgment on the efforts of the developing nations. On the one hand, capitalism, on the other hand, socialism or communism. Each ideol-

ogy presents itself as the model at the same time that it denounces the other. We cannot ignore this pressure, or we can only ignore it on the basis of the confidence of our people.

Let us recall the uniqueness of the revolution—of the 20th century—variously called the "revolution of rising expectations" or the "revolution of change"—characteristic of the century of the poor. Before us, national development was achieved, or had to be achieved, through the exploitation of man by man. . . . It can be said, although a little oversimplified, that the humanist tradition of Western development was underwritten by the blood, or to be less colorful, the mis-development of colonized peoples. This is a procedure, however, that can no longer be repeated. Not because this is absolutely impossible, since colonialism can take subtle

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