

**W**HAT WAS regarded as impossible in the Philippines came true in recent weeks.

For the first time, students in many universities and colleges in the Greater Manila area and throughout the country turned inward their campuses and demanded reforms within their schools.

Student demonstrations have been common particularly since the early sixties, but these have been directed at matters outside the schools: graft and corruption, American imperialism, Congressional allowances, crime, and so forth, but this time, students have discovered there have been many things wrong on their own campuses and quadrangles.

The recent student strikes were apparently inspired by the move of the public school teachers in Manila to walk out of their classrooms for failure of the city government to release their salary differentials. The public school teachers themselves set a record by striking for the first time when they saw that while they had been denied their just due the city mayor



Over at the Diliman campus the University of the Philippines students declared a strike which was joined in by ordinarily apathetic elements such as the faculty and non-academic personnel.

For the first time in the history of the U.P. students succeeded in bringing the university into a grinding halt. Students in red arm bands were stopping vehicles and urging occupants to join them.

The original 77 demands of the students ranged from student autonomy to smoking outside the classrooms, but after a series of

negotiations with the newly installed president, Salvador P. Lopez, who had just left his post as Philippine Ambassador to the UN, the demands were compressed into about twenty which were discussed with President Marcos in an unusual confrontation with U.P. students.

Before the meeting at U.P., President Marcos met with student leaders at Centro Escolar University where he:

1. Ordered Secretary of Finance Eduardo Romualdez to use his visitorial powers and see if he can make the private educational institutions reduce their tuition fees to the 1966 level.

2. Constituted an *ad hoc* committee to study the creation of a youth and student affairs office through an administrative order;

3. Authorized the release of P5 million from unprogrammed appropriations for the improvement of the facilities of state colleges and universities.

4. Said he would certify to Congress a bill providing for a Magna Carta for students.

5. Announced he was setting aside P3 million as a trust fund for student welfare projects and civic action programs.

## Students On The March

and councilors had been enjoying fat allowances.

In no time, students in Manila universities and colleges were staging sympathy demonstrations, and made their own demands, particularly reforms in their schools and the lowering of tuition fees.

At the Lyceum, students demanded the readmission of several students and press freedom. In a few days students were provoked into breaking practically all the glass windows of Lyceum while student leaders and the university officials tried to negotiate the end of the strike.

The student unrest spread to Far Eastern University, University of the East, Philippine College of Criminology, Manila Central University, Mapua Institute of Technology, FEATI, University of Manila, Philippine Maritime Institute, and the University of Santo Tomas and other schools across the country.



PRES. MARCOS meets with UP students.



6. Ordered the revision of the manual of information issued by the Bureau of Private Schools so that it would be more effective in giving the students the means to establish stability in schools.

7. Set aside ₱2 million for scholarships in technology and science for needy but deserving students effective next school term.

8. Ordered the immediate processing and award of land titles to claims of state educational institutions.

At his meeting with U.P. students the President also:

1. Directed the restoration of fraternities and sororities outlawed by the university.

2. Ordered Executive Secretary Rafael Salas to constitute and head a committee which will meet periodically with student leaders to thresh out their problems.

3. Ordered the release of necessary funds for the improvement of university facilities.

The strike in U.P. was however far from over and the students continued with their strike until they said all their demands were satisfied.

The strikes easily spread to U.P. in Iloilo, U.P. in Los Baños, U.P. in Baguio. More Manila campuses such as Manuel L. Quezon University, Arellano University, felt the rumblings of students on the march.

It has been felt however that what would have been a truly explosive situation was defused when President Marcos himself went to the students to conduct a dialogue unprecedented in Philippine educational history.

As the President himself told the students: "I have opened this dialogue, and I hope that it will continue. Feel free to see me; you have a standing invitation."

By the time the student unrest simmered down, President Marcos has certified to Congress the bills proposing a Magna Carta for Students.

The bills stressed the rights of students in matters of admission, due process, free publications, competent instruction, student government, use of campus facilities, academic freedom, and respect of the rights of others.

The President also formed by executive order the youth and student affairs office that will act as a liaison between students and the government and serve as a clearing house for student demands and grievances. **PM**



## A MONUMENT TO FILIPINO GENIUS

When the Cultural Center of the Philippines opens this summer it will be the culmination of long years of frustrations. For the first time since the war, the nation's artists will be given a place of honor, and a place where they can be honored. Too long, have our artists suffered the humiliation of having to perform in commercial and cinema houses, often under the sponsorship of foreign foundations whose primary interest is to impose their idea of art or culture on a people still seeking their place in the world. The Cultural Center of the Philippines, built through funds raised by Mrs. Imelda R. Marcos, rectifies these shortcomings.

Last month, Senator Benigno Aquino attempted to make a political issue out of the Cultural Center, saying in effect that it is for the *élite* and not for the masses. Senator Aquino's attacks, delivered in a most unkindly manner, have long been dismissed as political moves (to test Mrs. Marcos's public support?) but questions still linger on whether it was really necessary to build a center for the arts. If national leaders were developing not men, but machines, then perhaps all that is needed is oil. But national construction means the development of the whole man, as well. Great men throughout the world were steeped in the humanities. It is the task of national leaders to see to it that citizens have a chance to prosper both materially and intellectually. The arts and commerce should go hand in hand.

In an interview with *The Philippine Magazine*, Mrs. Marcos declined to pursue the political issues raised by Sen. Aquino but requested critics to be patient. "In a few months we will inaugurate the Cultural Center," she said, "let's see if we built it for the *élite* or for the people." Mrs. Marcos said that the public will be admitted free to many of the exhibitions at the Cultural Center. "If we have to charge for some presentations to compensate the artists, I assure you the fee will be within the reach of all art lovers."

The Cultural Center of the Philippines stands on a piece of reclaimed land along Roxas Boulevard in Manila. When finished, it will be one of the country's tourist attractions. The view from the boulevard, at sunset, with the silhouetted Cultural Center building in the foreground, is simply breathtaking. To think that less than two years ago, this was a bare patch of land. What never fails to amaze visitors, especially Americans who are themselves proud of their Lincoln Center, is the speed with which the Cultural Center was built. It took the Rockefeller 15 years to build the Lincoln Center; dedicated Filipinos build theirs in two years.

In grateful recognition of her efforts, the nation's artists trooped to Malacañang last month to thank Mrs. Imelda R. Marcos for constructing the Cultural Center of the Philippines.

—SPB