

The Marvellous Country

The Philippines

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Introduction

I have spent four months travelling around in the Philippines. I saw wonderful landscapes in this world of islands. I spent my time together with many nice people, who in spite of being in the middle of such tremendous challenges as immense poverty, corruption and crime, still were capable of showing great hospitality, warmth and friendliness. I wanted to give them something back and this article is the beginning of that. I have tried to write this article using both my heart and my head, trying to describe my joy, engagement and excitement, but also my grief, despair and sadness. I have written about what I saw and how I understood what I saw. I got important knowledge, facts and opinions from Philippine newspapers, books and from The Internet, where many great Philippine personalities have contributed with their thoughts. Important as well were the huge archives of the US magazines, Time and Newsweek. The opinions of Philippine authors like F. Sionil Jose, Walden Bello, Benedicta Ma. Rosario and the English reporter David Dalton, were decisive for my own opinion and judgment. I am grateful that my friends Margareta Holmström, Michael Page and Bill Elgart used their time to read through my article for advice and comments.

A Beautiful Country

To be a traveler in a country near the equator, means to get used to the heat and the humidity. Here I felt that the sun shone intensely, but caring and life-giving into the landscape, the air was filled, almost wet, and nature really swelled harmoniously half drunk with pleasure and quiet excitement under the heat. The rice fields, the numerous coconut palm trees and the sugar cane fields brought a beautiful order into the jungle-like landscape divided by powerful, huge volcanoes looking like some great, but very lonely personalities. The many kinds of banana trees, the grand and noble mango trees and fields of pineapples are characteristics of this landscape. The Philippines is a huge archipelago of 7102 islands, surrounded by the South China Sea, the Sulu Sea and the Pacific, a paradise for divers, swimmers and snorkelers, for thousands of beautiful sea living animals, corals and plants. Here are beautiful white and also black sand beaches. Wonderful clear sea water inspires one to go for a swim. In the autumn, when the monsoon comes to the northern part of Cebu Island, the dangerous jellyfish, the Portuguese man-of-war (*Physalia physalis*) can be seen. Since many fishermen some years ago preferred using dynamite for fishing, some previously beautiful seashore areas today are totally destroyed. Only a cold, wet, dead stone underwater desert is left.

Caught in a dilemma

Here are some short facts characterizing a situation from one point of view. In 1960 the population was 27 million, in 1980, 66 million, and in 2009, the CIA fact book reports, 97 million. In 1965 the foreign debt was less than \$1billion, in 1986, \$28 billion and in 2008, \$54 billion. The foreign debt grows almost congruently with the growth of the population. It seems that the country finances its social living standards mainly on credit.

In June and July 2009 bombs exploded in several places in Mindanao terrorizing and killing civilians. American bomb squad soldiers and CIA specialists went to Mindanao to support and help the Government against this old threat of terrorism. Actually the terrorist problem is a very complicated one, caused by the government itself. "Expropriated property", forced supervision, jurisdiction and control and supported migration from the northern Philippines to the south, is told to be the cause. With this background of anxiety, fear, and the worry caused by bloodshed and killings over 40 years, the situation looks to me very much like the conflict between Israel and Palestine. It is so difficult that no one in power dare touch it. At least that's the way it appears. As the bombs explode, some journalists immediately formulate the theories that the situation is being manipulated by the leaders to effect the upcoming 2010 elections. Yes, President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo (PGMA) stands behind this. Through the bomb attacks she attempts to make the population insecure and to destabilize the country, they say. Her aim is to claim *martial law*. That is why the House of Representatives passed the House Resolution (HR) 1109 in June 2009. It will make it possible for PGMA and her followers to postpone the upcoming election in 2010.

A similar move was being made by the last Tyrant (Marcos) just to enable him to stay in power longer. The fact that these rumors found their way to the newspapers, indicates that they are believed by many <http://www.philstar.com/Article.aspx?articleId=484526&publicationSubCategoryId=63>).

Ferdinand Edralin Marcos

It is understandable that a leader who had to flee his country is not a beloved one. But it is obvious that he is not the cause of the problems in the country, as many even today, 20 years after his death in Hawaii, are claiming. His inaugural speech, "Mandate for Greatness", December 30, 1965, shows what kind of challenges he inherited:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ferdinand_Marcos

"The Filipino, it seems, has lost his soul, his dignity, and his courage. We have come upon a phase of our history when ideals are only a veneer for greed and power, (in public and private affairs) when devotion to duty and dedication to a public trust are to be weighted at all times against private advantages and personal gain, and when loyalties can be traded. ...Our government is in the iron grip of venality, its treasury is barren, its resources are wasted, its civil service is slothful and indifferent, its armed forces demoralized and its councils sterile. We are in crisis. You know that the government treasury is empty. Only by severe self-denial will there be hope for recovery within the next year. This nation can be great again. This I have said over and over. It is my articles of faith, and Divine Providence has willed that you and I can now translate this faith into deed".

He started his work as president filled with an immense energy, beginning with the construction of roads, bridges and public works, a generator for electric power and water services to eight regions and 38 localities. He wanted to meet the challenges of the judiciary, the national defense and the fight against smuggling, crime and corruption in the government, in a proper way. He seemed to be a genius. Never had anybody seen someone doing that much for a country. A leader doing all this for his country appears as a true hero.

But as he was elected for a second term in 1969, he himself initiated the first steps leading to his downfall. This happened through an action that showed that he had lost his head to forces stronger than himself, to a megalomania that hit many a great leader (e.g. Nero, Napoleon, Idi Amin in Uganda, Silvio Berlusconi in Italy): He gave an order that a picture of him as the President had to hang in every business and every school, otherwise it would be shut down. Crisis upon crisis broke in; in the economy, student revolts (the famous 68 generation, as it swept over the whole western world, e.g. San Francisco, Paris and Berlin, now also in the Philippines), a high increase of crime and terrorist attacks (many students joined the NPA). To be able to cope with these challenges, he proclaimed martial law in 1972. This lasted until 1981, when he was reelected. He proclaimed the "Birth of a new Republic," stating he would love to be "*eternal president*" of the Philippines.

Non Violent Ninoy Aquino

A man like Marcos had to accept that his destiny had given him an opposing player by his side. This man was Ninoy Aquino. Marcos never liked him, but he seemed to respect him. Ninoy, or Benigno Aquino, was a man of great courage, a lot of wit and a sharp tongue. Where Marcos fought for his political life with "all possible" methods, Ninoy embodied the Christian idea of "giving the emperor what belonged to the emperor"; the idea of freedom through non violence. He was a father of 5 children. Born (1932) into a family of political heavyweights, he started his career as a journalist. At the age of 22, he became a mayor. He established himself early as an opponent to Marcos, who feared him. On August 21, 1983 Ninoy Aquino, Jr. was assassinated. It was never proven that Marcos stood behind this. Aquino had spent 7.5 years in prison as a political prisoner in the Philippines. Ferdinand Marcos honored him by sending him his own wife to offer him release from jail. He was released to go abroad (US). After 3 years he decided to come back.

He went home, with these words : <http://philippinesfreepress.wordpress.com/2006/08/20/the-conscience-of-the-filipino-the-sacrifice-1986/>

“According to Gandhi, the willing sacrifice of the innocent is the most powerful answer to insolent tyranny that has yet been conceived by God and man.” Before boarding the plane from Taipei for Manila, he said to a television crew that was accompanying him on that fatal day: “You have to be ready with your hand camera because this action can come very fast. In a matter of three, four minutes it could be all over and I may not be able to talk to you again. Now I am taking precautions. I have my bulletproof vest. But if they hit me in the head there’s nothing we can do (by Teodoro M. Locsins).”

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benigno_Aquino,_Jr.

In his last formal statement that he wasn't able to deliver, he wrote, "I have returned to join the ranks of those struggling to restore our rights and freedom through nonviolence. I seek no confrontation".
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zuEPft-Dd-Q>

His spiritual heritage, the famous non violent EDSA revolution, took place three years later. It is astonishing and remarkable that after the reign of Marcos, with the extended use of violence, prison and torture, the people still answered with non violent protests. This is actually happening in South East Asia, where violence by Governments was a common way of dealing with protests or riots of any kind. Pure power was the traditional method when the opinion of a group didn't fit that of the Government. Democracy was only superficial. Ferdinand Marcos fled with his wife and some close friends to Hawaii. Behind him he left a country with debts of more than \$28 billion. When he started as president in 1965 it was less than \$1 billion. But with the help of heavy financial support from the US, he built more schools, hospitals and infrastructure than any of the presidents before him combined.

Cause Of Corruption

The Honeymoon's Over For President Estrada, Philippines – December 1999

<http://www.aseanfocus.com/asiananalysis/article.cfm?articleID=211>

“Corruption has a history extending back into colonial times and has become a deeply embedded phenomenon in the Philippines although recent surveys by international bodies, such as Transparency International, indicate that the situation might be improving. Some executives would disagree. In a survey for the Far Eastern Economic Review, 42 per cent of the executives polled said that corruption had actually increased since the Asian financial crisis began. The World Bank has also weighed into the debate with a report alleging 20 per cent of the Philippine budget is being lost to corruption. The President has made a typically dramatic response warning corrupt officials 'Watch out, your days are numbered no matter who you are'. He has also made an equally predictable organizational response by setting up a new body, the Presidential Committee for Efficient Governance”.

Towards Real Democracy

After my meetings and discussions with the Filipinos it is obvious to me that all of them want a society where they can live and act as free men and women. I understand that they long for exactly the same opportunities that the Europeans and Americans fought for during the Second World War. They want to live in a society, as the Europeans do, based on the thoughts of the philosophers Socrates and Plato, Pericles, and the Polis. These thoughts have reached fruition, and many great individuals in history have contributed to their development. “Liberty, equality and fraternity (brotherhood)”, this fragile blossom, carefully protected, is the inspiration of social development in the entire western world. The Polis enabled the people to be cultural beings, with everyone equal under the Law. This is what the Europeans (politically) still fight for today. The Filipinos want also to be a part of this.

But in the Philippines the armed forces (AFP) are the power above the democracy, like Archangel Gabriel watching over Moses. The AFP does not represent the majority. It represents the Power. Its homepage on the Internet tells us in few words about its tasks: “Freedom. Your right. Our responsibility”. It has its own judges, its own jails and its own secret police. It is the guardian of democracy, but does not trust it!

David Dalton writes (The Rough Guide to the Philippines, edition 2007): “The presidency of Cory Aquino (1933 – 2009) was plagued by problems because she never managed to bring the powerful feudal families or the armed forces under her control. Land reform was eagerly awaited by the country’s landless masses, but when Aquino realized reform would also involve her own family’s hacienda in Tarlac, she quietly shelved the idea: most of the country’s farmers remain beholden to the landlords today. Aquino survived seven coup attempts and made little headway in improving life for the majority of Filipinos who were – and still are – living below the poverty line”.

Role Of The Army

The role and power of the Philippine army became obvious when Joseph “Erap” Estrada, a former “tough-guy film actor with pomaded hair and a cowboy swagger” (Dalton), was pushed out from the president’s office: “Then came the decisive blow. The military announced it had withdrawn its support for Estrada”. What the army wants they get. But just as important as the army are about 60 families, says Dalton:

“Corruption runs unchecked. The gap between the impoverished and a thin layer of super-wealthy grows ever wider. Just 60 of the Philippines’ estimated 15 million families control virtually all the nation’s wealth, and about 200 run its political life”.

José P. Rizal (1861-1896)

José P. Rizal is recognized as the spiritual father of the Philippine people today. His ideas are strong and still very much alive, supported and furthered by many Filipinos and especially by the Philippine catholic church. Did he as well inspire Ninoy Aquino to plead for the non-violent revolution in 1986? Did the thoughts and ideas in his novel “Noli Me Tangere” inspire this unusual non-violent activity within all of South East Asia?

Obviously, it was in Europe that he found his spirituality, encouraging and filling him with excitement. In Europe he met the finest ideas of the European culture from the 19th century, the classical school of knowledge built upon the Greek philosophers, from Plato (especially Socrates – whose life was similar to that of Rizal. He was put to death by the citizens of Athens for teaching the young men to think) and Aristotle. Through this background we can see his deep understanding and involvement with Christian ideas and thoughts. Through this we can understand his relationship with important personalities of European history, such as Johann Wolfgang Goethe. Both of them stood on Christian ground with an immense interest in the arts and philosophy, but also science; e.g. physics, medicine, geology or ethnology.

From Rizal Tears and Smiles (Benedicta Ma. Rosario, 2008):

”The novel, Noli Me Tangere (literally, Touch Me Not), told the world that the Filipinos could become a great people if only Spain showed more consideration and kindness. The Filipinos worked like slaves under the Spaniards and did not enjoy any freedom to develop their own art and culture. Although the novel also revealed some weaknesses of some Filipinos – like indifference, laziness, lack of genuine patriotic feeling, liking for gambling, lack of true industry and thrift, it was a hit with those who were able to read it. It was banned in the Philippines.”

”Noli Me Tangere tells about the young man Ibarra, who, having obtained a university education in Europe, comes home to the Philippines full of the zeal and idealism of a dedicated reformist.”

It is amazing what literature can achieve, if the author finds what he is seeking. Rizal hit the nail on the head and found his audience. And the Filipinos found him. He had written the right words explaining and identifying his people and his country, just like Henrik Ibsen did for the Norwegians, Thomas Mann for the Germans and Samuel Langhorne Clemens (Mark Twain) for the US Americans. Unfortunately he was not allowed to serve his country further because he was shot by the Spaniards in 1896, only 35 years old.. Just listen to how he, filled with love, but also with deep respect for the truth, describes his character Captain Tiago (Chapter VI):

“At the time of our story, therefore, Captain Tiago was a happy man, he was rich, he was at peace with God, with the Government, and with men. That he was at peace with God cannot be doubted; it was almost a dogma. There are no reasons to be on bad terms with the good God when one is well-off, has never had any dealings with Him, and has never lent Him money (Benedicta Ma. Rosario, 2008).”

This is, even today, 120 years later, a precise description of a common way of relating to Christianity in the Philippines. He saw, beyond the driving force of Power and Money, that a deeper level of truth was reachable. He experienced that more points of view could reach more than only one single individual. He understood, that discussion and dialogue between seeking individuals, is the carrier of the truth (Benedicta Ma. Rosario, 2008):

““Genius knows no country,” Dr. Jose Rizal said when Juan Luna was awarded a gold medal for his “Spolarium” and Felix Hidalgo a silver medal for his “Christian Virgins Exposed to the Mob” at the National Exposition of Fine Arts in Madrid in 1884. Following this artistic victory of the Filipinos, Dr. Rizal suggested that they get together and come up with another great product, a novel that would picture Philippine conditions more directly and clearly than paintings allegorically showing old Rome. His proposal was unanimously approved by a group of Filipinos, among whom were Graciano Lopez Jaena, Valentin Ventura, Melecio Figueroa, Evarista Aguirre, Julio Llorente, and the Paterno brothers Pedro, Antonio and Maximino. Unfortunately the compatriots expected to collaborate on the novel did not contribute anything.”

Today around 83% of Filipinos are members of the Philippine catholic church. They feel intimately connected with the ideology of the church regardless of existing in a country surrounded by Muslims (Indonesia, Malaysia), Buddhism (Thailand), Confucianism, Taoism (China) and Shintoism (Japan). This I consider extraordinary and perhaps as a result of “the smiling people's” meeting with catholic missionaries after the Spaniards occupied these beautiful islands. Many Filipinos today identify themselves with the same social ideas in the New Testament as the great European, Johann Wolfgang Goethe did (from The Fairytale, translated by T. Carlyle, 1832):

“What is grander than gold?” inquired the King.
“Light,” replied the Snake.
“What is more refreshing than light?” said he.
“Speech,” answered she.

All the European and US intellectuals are even today inspired of the depth of Socrates' talks. But this quality of discussion is vanishing within the western world, mostly being practiced by politicians and reporters. The Philippines is different! Here the people still have a feeling of truth, of dignity and courtesy. Here a word is important, here a promise comes from the heart! Here an official talk, speech or discussion still can reach a spiritual level.

Political Struggle And Methods

One year before the 2010 elections, the President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo (PGMA) is fighting “behind the scenes” for her position. Her desire is to stay in power also after 2010. At the same time, perhaps coincidentally, bombs exploding in Mindanao are also threatening Manila. Officially, efforts have been formulated to combat terrorism in Manila: Specially trained and heavily armed anti-terror forces in the streets. Some journalists have pointed out that these two situations might not be coincidental, but actually planned by the PGMA.

From the newspaper the philstar.com, July 24, 2009: <http://www.philstar.com/Article.aspx?articleId=489673&publicationSubCategoryId=63&newsalert>

“Instead of being affected by these talks of martial law, the AFP (Armed Forces Philippine) is doing its mandate to defeat all threats to internal security,” Brawner said. Ibrado also described as “highly presumptuous” the warning aired by Cruz that the Arroyo administration has been setting the stage for military rule. “He (Cruz) was implying that the government was behind the series of incidents (bombings). I will not agree with that. As far as I know there is no such plan and I think it’s highly presumptuous to say that the government was behind these bombings,” he said.

Time Magazine, March 10, 1986: In a television interview, Human Rights Lawyer Joker Arroyo, 58, now the President's executive secretary (Marcos), compared the Philippines to Argentina and its grisly legacy of "disappeared ones," the estimated 9,000 victims of military governments in Buenos Aires who mysteriously vanished between 1976 and 1982. "When the history of the Philippines is known," Arroyo said, "perhaps we will beat the record of Argentina in magnitude and torture."

NPA (New People's Army)

Since the 2nd World War the NPA is a disturbing reality, with up to 20,000 armed soldiers and its own system of justice, "the kangaroo court". It is commonly accepted that both poverty and corruption are reasons behind the growth and maintenance of NPA. But it is definitely not the NPA who should get the credit as the EDSA 1 ended as a non-violent revolution.

From a home -page for students about the EDSA revolution:

<http://library.thinkquest.org/15816/mainpage.html>

"For three days, men, women and children filled the streets of EDSA holding on frail hope. For those brief moments, they feared for their security, their lives, their future. Rumors were spreading all over that the forces from the loyalists were coming in from the north to silence the cry of the people through bullets and shells. The prayers grew louder; anxiety filled the air. From above, the citizens of Manila resembled ants swarming on the entire stretch of EDSA. Most of the streets were blockaded and trees were cut down to serve as makeshift anti-tank barricades. Curious civilians climbed the 25-ft. light posts to have a glimpse over the crowd. Along the curbs, women attended to the thirsty, hungry and the weary. Men stood vigilant and served as perimeter guards just in case loyalist troops decided to attack. Priests and nuns prayed and comforted people as they made their way through the population with rosaries at hand".

Christian Culture

The Filipinos have since the 16th century met missionaries from Europe, their devotion, unselfishness and contemplative obedience. The Christian movement in the Philippine started here. Today the strong Christianity in this country is something exceptional and the church is very much alive. Because of the serious engagement of its members, the catholic church in the Philippines, as the only church in Asia, US and Europe, is independent, strong and rich and has real power. The bishops are important people for the politicians. The church is an important political factor, but also a very important social factor. A possible change in this country will necessarily have to be connected with the social ideas of the Christian culture.

The European Christianity is almost unchanged since The Middle Ages. In Europe and the USA it has found ways into many different charismatic movements, but also there it is slowly coming to an end. Perhaps is it not the religion itself that is vanishing, as many might believe, but a change *of the way* of dealing with these ideas?

The Times Magazine, February 9, 1968:

"Another problem is that the monastic orders, most of which date from the Middle Ages, have been slower than most other branches to adopt the reforming spirit of the Second Vatican Council—although they are beginning to do so".

We are now living in Times of Change. But everything that is living within these Time, needs more time to change than I need to change a pair of shoes. A spiritual movement is about thousands and thousands of times mightier than a huge oil tanker, using at least a couple of kilometers to break down. The Christian movement is not vanishing, as many scientists are claiming, believing in the truth of statistics. It is changing into something else; slowly we are *accepting* the fact that God is not going to intervene into a world of injustice, war, poverty and corruption, but that we ourselves have to take care of the challenges! The whole western world are now working on to move these thoughts and ideas onto a higher level, into consciousness and awareness. This is the sign of change, the sign of the disappearing of our old heritage from the Medieval Ages. Could this be the start of a new kind of Christianity, a movement of modern social ideas, based upon a fundamental belief in individual freedom? The question is, do the Filipinos already know and understand this in the depth of their hearts and minds?

Karaoke Singing

Take this fact into your heart, US citizen or you European resident! An important part of the treasured romantic poetry of the west is being learned by heart by Philippine men and women. It is amazing! Almost any famous song of the 20th century is being sung in every small village and city in the Philippines. They like to sing it loud. They never think that somebody might get disturbed! It is the poetry of our times made famous by Bing Crosby , Hildegard Knef, Frank Sinatra, Sammy Davis Jr. and Mireille Mathieu, Lennon and McCartney, Simon and Garfunkel. It is melodies composed by Burt Bacharach, sung by Elvis Presley or David Bowie, Christina Aguilera, and Johnny Hallyday. It is astonishing how ordinary men and women all over the Philippines are eagerly diving into this part of western culture. And so many. Songs that long ago are forgotten in the west, are still being sung in the Philippines. Why are so many Filipinos connecting enthusiastically with such an important part of western culture? The singers really identify with these songs! The songs and the poetry represent something very important. The Filipinos want to be inside it! In a *karaoke* bar.

To Find Identity

As I travelled through the Philippines I met many open and warmhearted men or women, who warned me about corrupt army and police. The taxi drivers, the tricycle drivers, the porters at the bus terminals, farmers, fishermen and beggars; everyone told me to watch out. "Don't trust the system of justice in our country!" Later I experienced that this invisible corruption appears like a bad disease that already has eaten its way into the bones; the skeleton of the country. Everybody I met knew what a terrible situation their country had to deal with, because of the corruption. There were also rumors that some powerful politicians had the bad habit of murdering their political opponents. I asked many people if they believed in it, because I had trouble doing so. But all of them agreed. "Extrajudicial killings" do exist. Murders done by the army and/or the police, without law and order, lawyer and court, are part of their everyday life. In spite of facing such a reality, many had the ability to shut this door and open the opposite one. They believed in the good things in life, enjoyed themselves, had beautiful talks and discussions, nice family meetings, danced and sung, felled in love and visited new places. Surprisingly it is, living with poverty didn't mean no laughter and joy. I found an atmosphere of optimism, of hope and happiness in the streets of many cities and towns. I was an honored guest in many a poor, bamboo hut, welcomed with warmth and the best gifts they could offer. Jose E. Sionil says (*We Filipinos, Our Moral Malaise, Our Heroic Heritage*, 1999):

"I would like to think that my country's attraction lies in the natives themselves – warm, extraordinarily friendly, often too accommodating and open to a fault".

But they also lowered their voices and whispering, told me about the National People Army (NPA), whose history goes back to the Second World War, as a forgotten group of warriors, fighting for fairness and justice as the US GI's took control of the country. The NPA has had armed soldiers since then. They kidnap, they kill and rule. They prosecute and judge with the help of their own private system of justice. That means, if you are a lucky guy, you get the warning. If not, your head is on a pole the next day! You never know where they have their ears; therefore it is necessary to whisper. You're never sure which one they go for. You might get killed! The NPA operates in Luzon, Mindanao and Negros. They want to rule the country, but are not interested in democracy. They don't want to be elected as state officials or have an ordinary political party. To me it seems like some old soldiers forgotten in the jungle for almost 50 years, now wanting to rule the same way their forefathers did. They do not understand that the world has moved on. They do not see that time has changed. The Filipinos did not choose themselves to live with injustice. They had to accept the fact that many of their lawyers, judges and courts are corrupt. Additionally they have to live with the NPA, practicing their Kangaroo courts. Therefore it is easy to understand why the Filipinos feel insecure.

The United States Of America

So far the main role of the Philippines in world history was being the only colony of the USA. Today the Las Vegas-/Hollywood culture of the US is the culture that most Filipinos love. In spite of the 200,000 Filipinos killed during their fight for independence in 1898, they didn't attain it until July 4, 1946. David Dalton writes (in the same book):

“The country's musical culture is largely an appropriated one, assimilated from fifty-odd years of imperial rule by Washington that sought to recreate America in the East and ended up creating a generation of teenagers who thought first Foreigner and then Michael Bolton were cool.”

Today the upper classes send their children to the US universities. Philippine television appears like second hand American TV. McDonald and other junk food companies have a very big share of the Philippine market. The connections are still strong between the two countries. Every year the Philippines get a large amount of support in dollars as aid from the US.

“The United States has a long-standing and successful development partnership with the Philippines. Over the past 30 years, U.S. Embassy Manila's USAID Mission has provided more than US\$5 billion in total assistance, making the United States the largest grant donor to the Philippines”.
(<http://manila.usembassy.gov/www3028.html>):

From the Manila Bulletin, May 15, 2009:

“The government has welcomed the increased US assistance of \$667 million for the Philippines in the proposed fiscal year 2010 US budget”. From the same article: “The Philippines has also been engaged with the US Government's Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) and expects to conclude talks this year on at least US\$350 million worth of grants for poverty alleviation and development projects”.

Genuine Filipino Attitude

The Filipinos have extraordinary warmth and friendliness. They are in fact a “smiling people”, as some call them. Perhaps it is quite natural that here, in the middle of the south seas, God has given the people everything they need. It almost seems that when you drop a seed into the soil, you will have a tree with delicious fruit next week! The fertility is tremendous! The Filipinos pray for this and they are grateful. This gives them the feeling of beauty and meaning in life, and because they are grateful of this in front of God himself, they also want to pass this feeling on to their visitors and guests.

Challenges Of The Past

From Newsweek Magazine, Joe Studwell, July 23, 2007:

“The architecture of the Southeast Asian economy remains what it was 10 and 50 and 100 years ago. The domestic economies of Hong Kong, Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines are all still dominated by reclusive, enigmatic billionaires and their families, even if fewer of them rank among the richest people in the world. In 1996 no less than eight of the top two dozen billionaires on the Forbes global rich list were Southeast Asian; in 2006 only Hong Kong's Li Ka-Shing, with a net worth of US\$18.8 billion, ranked in the top 24. Nonetheless, while some Southeast Asian tycoons have been overtaken by more entrepreneurial billionaires from other parts of the world, the region remains the global epicenter of *rentier* family business”.

From the same article: “A decade after the Asian crisis, Southeast Asia's billionaires remain in the ascendancy because promised deregulation has never bitten. Even Hong Kong— lauded by the Heritage Foundation as the world's freest economy (de facto cartels affect the port to supermarkets to electricity to cement) —has failed to pass the kind of antimonopoly statutes that are a central pillar of developed economies around the world. There has been no substantive progress on creating a common free market in services for the members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, despite relentless rhetoric”.

When did this happen?

The same issue: “The Philippines has lurched from one banking crisis to the next for almost a century, some based around state banks and others around private banks set up by tycoons. The country has never recovered from the financial-sector meltdown in the mid-1980s, when Marcos went into exile”. The same issue: “Where Southeast Asian states stuck with modified colonial rentier systems after the Second World War, South Korea and Taiwan took a different course. They successfully implemented land reform—in stark contrast to countries like the Philippines, where political elites have ensured the continuance of a landed ascendancy—and thereby ensured a bottom-up development process”.

How did the mega-rich businessmen behave?

The same source:

“The most extraordinary escape story was that of the Widjaya family, which crawled out from under a cumulative debt of \$13.9 billion owed by their Asia Pulp and Paper business and its subsidiaries. The Widjayas forced almost all their creditors to take a haircut, bought back bonds they issued for pennies on the dollar, survived the attempted intervention of senior European and American politicians with the government in Jakarta and faced down legal suits from Singapore to the United States”.

This historical background explains why so many Filipinos behave as crooks and bandits, trying to pump as much money as possible out of a stranger from a foreign country. Not only bus conductors, porters, taxi drivers and vendors, but also officials at the immigration office (in Cebu), charging almost the equivalent of a worker’s monthly salary simply for an extension of a visa. And on top of it all they charged an “express-lane fee”(God knows who needed it. Nobody did. The official in charge couldn’t explain it). The terminal fees in the airports, ferry ports and some bus terminals have the same effect. These are all places the tourists have to use. It is a shameful attitude of greed! It looks like it comes all the way from the top level of the Philippine society, down to the last porter at the bottom level.

Lack Of Identity

But their feeling of identity is distant. Widespread phenomena such as fear, crime as well as hypocrisy, lies and deceit, including the misuse of power, greed, violence and torture are signs of missing identity. The helplessness in confronting rumors, is another sign of a weak identity. It is almost impossible to distinguish between rumors and the truth. A lot of destructive rumors are floating through the air in political Manila, at all times! So many a Filipino is like a ping pong ball on the table of coincidence! Fears of all sorts of conspiracy theories are evidence of this.

Soon after Marcos declared martial law (1972), one American high-ranking official (cabinet member of the Reagan administration) described the Philippines as a country composed "of 40 million cowards and one son of a bitch."

<http://www.manilatimes.net/national/2008/sep/19/yehey/opinion/20080919opi6.html>

The writer F. Sionil José writes (same source):

”We are a paradox even to ourselves. The cliché question of identity, for instance, bedevils many of us not because we are unsure of ourselves but because we cannot, to our own satisfaction, define ourselves”.

Task Of A System Of Justice

Their strength, their longing to live a meaningful life, is undermined by the corrupt system of justice, as well as by the NPA, MNLF, MILF (Moro Islamic Liberation Front) and Al Qaida. Bad weeds grow tall, but only where the mother plant doesn’t have the strength of resistance. The Filipinos cannot trust their own judicial system. A good system of legal security never evolved; it failed! Because the individuals who took care of it were not strong enough to withstand the temptations of money. Too many wanted to fill their own pockets!

They did not know that the real costs of this action were extremely high; the pillar where the identity of the Philippine should develop, failed! The servants of justice dug and are still digging a hole under the feet of their people! With the development of the Vigilantes, the extrajudicial killings started and things got worse!

Extrajudicial Killings

Such killings usually took place in the following way: Two well trained men on a motorbike, one with a gun or a shotgun, drove close up to the victim. Shooting to kill. This could happen at any time, day or night. The whole scene took only a few seconds and then the murderers disappeared. The dead person laid on the side of the street. People stood waiting for an ambulance and a doctor. Well trained men, handling a gun while riding on a motorbike. They were professional killers!

In Davao, Mindanao, more than 200 people, mostly minors, were killed between 2006 and 2008. The killers came to their houses, killing them without warning, even in front of their families, leaving a note on the dead body, saying: "I regret being a criminal, a drug addict or a dealer." They killed wrong persons too and expanded their killings to political opponents and journalists. In Davao they were called the Davao Death Squad. Rodrigo Duterte became Mayor of Davao in 1988. Today, 21 years later, Davao is a quiet city with 1.4 million inhabitants. Almost everyone in town is happy and proud, only the families of the killed are not. The mayor says "you cannot prove any connections between me and the murderers". Many of the citizens agreed to this way of dealing with crime. They admire their mayor. There was a very high rate of crime before he came into office. Now the city is safe!

The Mayor himself told Time Magazine

<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,265480,00.html> in June 2002:

"In 1993, Davao's San Pedro Cathedral was hit with three grenades during an evening Mass. Six parishioners were killed. The attackers were Muslim militants, the sort easily found in Davao, a time-honored haven for kidnappers, bandits, communist rebels and roaming private armies. Four of the attackers were quickly arrested. Just as quickly, Duterte relates, "They went missing." Disappeared. Dead. "Then," the mayor says flatly, "it got ugly." Further killings? "More like assassinations," he says. The targets, other militants, didn't receive the courtesy of arrest, much less a trial. Were they dispatched on his orders? "Oh no," he responds. "I don't believe in state-sponsored killing." A pause. "I can't say any more, but I taught them a lesson."

As a tourist I was very surprised that this was the way they solved their problems. First I thought that taking care of these social challenges belonged only to Davao, but I was wrong! It was also done in Cebu, the second capital of the Philippines, 6 years years ago. Some brave journalists wrote about it. They were stopped. It is still being done in other cities and also in Manila, but under the name of 'killing criminals'. It is really being done to get rid of political opponents.

From Time Magazine, same issue:

If we had 20 more mayors like Duterte," says Fred Lim, an ex-mayor of Manila who is no stranger to tough tactics, "the peace and order situation in the Philippines would improve." That's one way of looking at it. Others say Duterte has achieved his results at a grim price, disregarding due process and appointing himself legislator, judge, jury and possibly executioner all at once. Justice in Davao, says Senator Rodolfo Biazon, a highly decorated former armed forces chief, is "not about following the law; it's about who's willing to go further."

This method of dealing with the unpleasant sides of life was as well being practiced against journalists. In an article in the Heritage.org from April, 2006 Dana R. Dillon writes that since 1986, 52 journalists were killed. Since the year 2000, 22 journalists were killed. This country of 97 million has not only one sick justice system run by the government, they also have the extra judicial killings, the NPA Kangaroo Court, the MNLF, MILF and Abu Sayyaf. It would be impossible for anyone in any country to find a national identity under such conditions! (<http://www.heritage.org/press/commentary/ed041706c.cfm>)

Poverty And Crime

Because poverty is growing quickly, it seems like a huge part of the population is not being recognized as full members and citizens of this country. This is the feeling they get. This group includes farmers, fishermen, craftsmen, uneducated and educated, single mothers, and through

them, many, many children. They all have panic in their eyes! They cannot afford food, they cannot afford housing any longer. They watch the rich people, who have so much money that they don't even know where to invest it. The poor people observe this and are getting bitter and angry. They take all the jobs they can get. There are obviously too many tricycle drivers, taxi drivers and porters. Around them, in front of every bank, every small business are armed guards with their finger on the trigger. In Bacolod City I counted about 100 armed men in an area of a couple of blocks in the center of the city. The confrontation with this huge poverty immediately gave me the feeling of shame. I could not find any acceptable reason why these people have to live like they actually do. It is very sad! Poverty in a country where the politicians generally belong to the jet set, increases this obviously criminal situation!

It is simply theft on a structural level!

F.Sionil José says (in the book mentioned):

“The crime rate is very high, as is public corruption, both of which are exhibited for all to read in a free-wheeling, rambunctious press. Sullen poverty is everywhere; and for those from temperate climes, the country is unbearable humid and hot”.

Also corruption is theft.

There are examples of small scale corruption and big scale corruption:

From the Manila Bulletin 15th of May 2009 (small scale):

“He said that in a meeting (March 23, 2009, about his desire to run for Congress...) Pangandaman promised to give the governor PHP 10 million and the mayors PHP 2 million each, along with the funds for projects. All told, Pimentel said, the agrarian reform chief offered PHP 44 million. Pangandaman reportedly offered each mayor a *Nissan Navarra pick up* and PHP 20 000 for their expenses, Pimentel claimed”.

(A big scale corruption, from Walden Bellos book, *The Political Economy of Permanent Crisis in the Philippines*, 2009 edition): “But after the dictator Ferdinand Marcos was ousted in 1986, former President Corazon Aquino started running after Lucio Tan’s “ill-gotten” wealth”. Then, when Fidel Ramos succeeded Aquino in 1992, he charged Tan with what was to be the biggest tax evasion case in recent Philippine history. But in 1998, Tan began chasing the evil spirits away by betting correctly in the presidential elections. With Joseph Estrada in Charge, the tax evasion case hounding him would be dismissed. His ailing Philippine Airlines (PAL) would be shielded from competition. And he would finally be able to seize ownership of his much-coveted Philippine National Bank (PNB)”. Eight months after Estrada promised Tan better days, the court of Appeal upheld the ruling of a lower court dismissing the PHP 25 billion tax fraud charged filed by the Ramos administration against Tan – on a technicality.”

The desire to put money into ones own pockets is only a minor reason of corruption. A clear understanding of the role of the state and its necessary structures for the well being of its inhabitants is missing.

From the same source as above:

“The very fact that non-state powers have been seeking to eliminate the capacity of the state through neoliberal policies of privatization, deregulation, and liberalization, for example, is in fact a very powerful acknowledgment that the state does matter”.

The understanding of the necessary structures of the idea “state”, its tasks and duties, is part of the discussion about what corruption really is all over the world. The state is important, but we do not yet know exactly why it is so. The development of a global consciousness started for the first time in a powerful way with the 68-generation. With them other people, different cultures and countries were taken up into the hearts of the western world in a new way. They experienced a severe, urgent need to proclaim departure from the past; now time was ripe to take responsibility, to put an end to narrow minded exploitation. Now the western world consciously wanted to inspire and finance necessary structural changes to secure a better future

for people, cultures and countries that we earlier had abused. With the 68 generation in the governments of the western world, the state take too much responsibility and regulates the lives of its inhabitants. Perhaps it has to be like that also in the Philippines in 2009, because a catastrophic social situation caused by too much poverty, corruption and criminality is coming up. They need help now! But was it always like that?

Time Magazine , October 21, 1966:

"More important than its value as a fighting ally and a site for American bases was the fact that—after 48 years of American occupation and two decades of independence—the Philippine Republic endures as Asia's freest democracy. It is no "showcase," to be sure, but it stands as a model of hope for all of non-Communist Southeast Asia: from the introverted Burma of Neutralist General Ne Win to the bankrupt chaos of Suharto's Indonesia; from royalist Thailand through Malaysia to trifurcated Laos; and certainly to South Viet Nam itself."

I was very impressed to read that the Philippines were as recognized as a "model of hope" for all non- communist countries in South East Asia in 1966. Time Magazine welcomed Ferdinand Marcos as the one who was going to take this country further.

"Quest for Identity. The custodian of those hopes, and of 33 million Filipinos, is a short, perpetually grinning man who walks with a military spring, drives a golf ball with the tense fury of Ben Hogan, and spends 20 hours a day on the job. As the sixth President of the Philippine Republic, Ferdinand Edralin Marcos, 49, has been in office only ten months, but in that time he has taken significant steps toward providing the Philippines with the dynamic, selfless leadership it needs to cope with the Southeast Asian burdens of poverty, lawlessness, Communist insurgency and —most important—the quest for national identity after centuries of colonial occupation."

Corruption And Justice Of Cowboys

As long as the system of justice is full of holes, the "uncomplicated" solutions of killing, will continue. The deep rooted corruption and the lack of respect for judges and courts are two sides of the same coin. Additionally the state itself unofficially accepts this method, the "extra judicial killings", supported by many of its citizens, because they are convinced their crime rate will go down! It is like some demon eating from the vital inner, spiritual organs of a beautiful and rich country and making it dammed and sick.

We know very well that this method is not originally a Philippine method. It was used in the USA, South America, in Europe, The Middle East and many countries in Asia; but in fact – just to remind us - extra judicial killings will always represent *a fatal destruction*, never construction!

It is of vital importance to have the courage to be truthful; a free democracy can never develop in this climate. It is necessary to know where the country stands and where it is going. It is dangerous to be a candidate for the presidency in the Philippines, a country where a threat against the power in charge, can be punished by death!

From Mining Watch, Canada:

http://www.miningwatch.ca/index.php?/Philippines/Political_Killings_Increase

Wednesday July 19, 2006

"Political killings of left-leaning activists, clergy and journalists in the Philippines have been escalating steadily under the Presidency of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. The majority of the victims belong to the Bayan Muna, a political group that is represented in parliament, of which as many as 95 members have been killed since 2001. However, other politically active groups have also been targeted, such as the Movement for National Democracy (KDP), an umbrella grouping of trade unions, farmers' and fishermen's organizations, and women's and youth groups. KDP has lost 5 members to extra-judicial killings this year alone. Over the past two months, unidentified assailants in various areas of the country have murdered at least 18 activists. The human-rights group Karapatan estimates that 601 activists have been killed since Macapagal-Arroyo came to power in 2001. Nearly all of the cases remain unresolved. An additional 140 activists are considered "disappeared" and remain missing. Almost all of those that have been executed are known leaders and local level organizers. In some cases witnesses have identified soldiers, police or members of paramilitary and vigilante groups. Other

victims are shot dead by masked men on motorcycles (Herbert Docena: *Killing Season in the Philippines*, 2006)".

The PSL, Party for Socialism and Liberalism, wrote on their web page in September, 2006:

The title: "Philippines: Hundreds of political killings under Arroyo".

http://www.pslweb.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=5637&news_iv_ctrl=1041

"On Sept. 7, Victor Olayvar, 41, president of BAYAN-Bohol, was shot dead as he was riding a passenger motorcycle. The assassins, from the Philippine army's 302nd Infantry Brigade, blocked his path with motorcycles and shot him at close range. Less than two months earlier, on July 31, Dr. Constancio "Chandu" Claver and Alyce Omengan Claver were riddled with M-16 bullets as they were dropping off their daughters at school. Alyce died several hours later. Dr. Claver, their 11-year-old daughter, and a student are recovering from injuries. Alyce Omengan Claver worked in the Cordillera student's organizations, including the Cordillera People's Alliance chapter in Manila, where she attended college. Chandu Claver is the chairperson of Bayan Muna-Kalinga, and the vice chairperson of CPA-Kalinga".

Social Climate

The social climate in the Philippines is strongly influenced by the fact that around 30% of the 97 million people are being forced to live beneath the poverty level. That is 29 million! What means 29 million exactly? For the sake of comparison: Canada has a population of 33 million, Israel 7, 2, Singapore has 4,6 and that's it! Taiwan has 23 million and Iraq has 30.7 million, which is only a little more than the poorest of the Philippines. Norway, Sweden and Denmark have populations between 4,7 and 9 Million. 29 million people is a lot. It is a huge number. 29 million are hungry, badly dressed, living with low housing standards, weak, afraid and exposed to diseases they wouldn't get if they were well fed! The most horrible fact is: This is totally *unnecessary*!!

Seen in contrast to the around 5000 people, who are so wealthy and rich that they don't even know what to do with their money, it is a very bad omen for the future. These people think they deserve the money they make! They do not want to understand the simple fact that only a certain amount of money runs through the monetary circulation of a country. If a few take the most of the money, the rest will have to share what is left!

Do we have to be reminded of what happened as an upbeat to the revolutions in Paris, in Germany and in Russia in the 19th and the 20th century in order to be able cope with what is going to happen in the Philippines if this situation doesn't change? It is going to be worse than the treatment of the Russian nobleman, who got his tongue nailed to the plate of his table in his dining room, before he was killed by his own badly treated farmers.

Unfair sharing of money has only violence as its consequence!

Unfortunately most of the rich and the wealthy do not see the connection! They have their mansions, their castles, their houses surrounded by beautiful gardens or nice parks within guarded areas, as if they really believe that the poverty does not exist! Poverty means weakness, hunger, feelings of unworthiness while living under disgraceful living standards, diseases and in many cases, bitterness. Bitterness is a common and well known cause for crime. To accept poverty, like the rich families in the Philippines are doing, is actually to accept that someone is *sawing off the branch* they are sitting on! A social catastrophe like a civil war based on poverty will be the ruin of the country, will have immense costs and will take centuries to heal, because such a disaster breeds new disasters.

Poor Against Heavily Armed Guards

The number of heavily armed guards in the cities, in front of every small business is amazing. They are equipped with shotguns and machine guns. They must always have their finger on the trigger. They are ordered to show the guns openly, as the real threat it actually is. Most of them are very young men without much life experience, but happy to have a job that pays around \$125 a month. I never saw that many dangerous weapons in my life, not even during my time in

the army. This profession is probably growing as fast and steadily as the poverty. The poverty in Bacolod is wide spread and deep and many of the poor are bitter. Their bitterness is easy to understand. They can see that the rich are living as kings and queens swimming in luxury at the same time as so many don't even have a proper home and are starving. They feel that this is not necessary. In London and Oslo even the police don't carry guns openly. I am very worried about the future in the Philippines, if the government doesn't manage to find a solution to this complicated challenge.

"The best political community is formed by citizens of the middle class — Aristotle (384 BC-322 BC), "Politics", from the blogspot of davidllorito).

A strong middle class like in Europe, doesn't exist in the Philippines. The middle class, the spine that carries the body of society and is functioning as a bridge between the very rich and the very poor, is missing. The middle class in the Philippines is weak and has no power. Both NPA and MNLF have developed out of this kind of division. It is like an evil snake biting itself in its tail. The rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer. The big amount of guards will not be capable to deal with this when the poor have had enough!

Middle Class As Future Backbone

Tourism has the potential to change the country, and some of the Filipinos could change the foreigners as well. Micro financing is a way of preserving the dignity and therefore a proper way of handling a development of this project. Approximately 2.2 million tourists visited the Philippines in 2005. In the same period Thailand (66 mill. inhabitants) had 7.3 million visitors (Statistics from nationmaster.com). We know that 10% of the population in Thailand is living under the poverty limit, but it is 30% in the Philippines! Therefore every possible source of income must be found, every stone must be turned upside down to find ways out of this.

PGMA has a project supporting the poorest of the poor people in her country. She suggested in June, 2009, that the monthly support of 15,000 Pesos (PHP) given to 700,000 families shall be expanded and given to 1 million families. This I understand as an immediate help and it will help the families to survive, but it does not give anything of value to the country. This is pure emergency help. Support to self reliance, to something that will last, is a better solution.

PGMA spend approximately \$312 million of the state budget.

A safer way to stabilize the very dangerous social situation in the country is to strengthen the country's "backbone", the poor part of the middle class. If the middle class is vanishing, it is like someone walking around without a backbone. It is difficult to walk properly. The country will "fall", because nothing carries its head.

Journalist-researcher Dave Llorito, based in Metro Manila, wrote on Oct.29th, 2007:

<http://davidllorito.blogspot.com/2007/10/vanishing-middle-class.html>

"It's through an expanding middle class where we could attain political stability and real democracy. But when a big chunk of the middle class is away, the country is left to two vastly different classes: the tiny elite who have a grip on most of the resources, and the overwhelming number of the poor and wretched and their increasingly angry voices. It's an understatement to say that's not a good environment for doing business."

Bed And Breakfast

The Philippine people are known worldwide for their friendliness and hospitality. This is the main capital of future tourism. My suggestion is therefore to loan every fisherman, farmer and teacher the amount of 100,000 Pesos. For this they could build an extra bedroom of western standard to be rented out for 250 Pesos a night, as a Live-with-a-native-family tourist project. This could be organized by an office established for this purpose or by the many Land Banks (if corruption is avoidable). This loan should be paid back from the second year with 10 % of the total income. The rate of interest should be as low as possible. An official tourist book of all addresses could be published every year spread in the tourist information offices abroad as well as within the country, and also on the Internet. Loan takers who do not pay back their debts will

be deleted from this list. To get this loan three requirements are worth considering (from an article of Dr. Virola): 1. The housing unit is made of strong roof materials; 2. You own a house and lot; 3. Income per year for loan takers is 200-500,000 Pesos, but it can be decided independently within every responsible office or bank. The craftsmen responsible for the work deliver their receipts to the office or the Land Bank. No money will be paid out to either the loan takers or the craftsmen.

If 5 million families (that means with an average of 6 children in a family 30 million people are affected), accept this offer, it will cost \$10,4 billion. But this is only half of the amount needed. The other half is for world wide marketing of the beautiful Philippines. It would allow the establishment of 500 marketing offices with a small marketing budget for 7 years in South East Asia, Europe and the US. The marketing offices will become financially independent within 7 years. The \$20,8 billion is being paid back within 10-12 years. These marketing efforts will produce approximately 5500 new jobs. Of the 5 million families who were living in poverty, 1-1,5 million families will be able to enter the middle class. That means they will make it by taking part in a regular business.

From inquirer.net printed 12/16/2007 (By Dr. Romulo A.Virola):
http://opinion.inquirer.net/inquireropinion/talkofthetown/view/20071216-107131/'Collapsing'_Filipino_middle_class

“We all know that the overarching goal of our development efforts is to reduce poverty. Toward this end, many programs and policies have been formulated, implemented and monitored over the years. Surely, there are improvements here and there, but the pace of progress just does not seem fast enough. In fact, per the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) monitoring by the National Statistical Coordination Board, we only have a medium probability of attaining our target to halve poverty by 2015! Why? Is something wrong with the implementation of these programs or are our poverty reduction strategies simply ill-conceived?”

From the same source:

“Generally, it is believed that, for a country to be truly and sustainably prosperous, there must be a broad-based middle class that serves as a stabilizing influence on society.”

“As of 2003, less than 1 in 100 families belongs to the high income class; about 20 are middle income and 80 are low income. Thus, in a span of six years from 1997 to 2003, for every 100 middle-income families, three families were lost to the low-income category. “

From a home-page on the EDSA revolution for students:
<http://library.thinkquest.org/15816/thebeginning.html>

“For the first time, the middle class came out. It struck me as being significant and crucial. You had husbands, mothers, children, teenagers, people from all professions – lawyers, doctors, and engineers. And finally you had the Makati people joining in. That was the most unprecedented. They were the most conservative people in the Philippines; they couldn't care less about demonstrations (Teodoro Benigno, bureau chief of Agence France Presse).”

About the author of this article:

He was born in 1953 in Norway. He worked as a teacher and businessman. Between 1991 and 2007 he lived in Germany. As an export manager he travelled extensively in Europe. His first visit to Asia, was to the Philippines in 2009. He got the information for this article by living with and talking to many natives, but also with retirees from England and Norway living in the Philippines. His interest was to recognize the depth and causes of the social challenges that are impeding a decent human life for the people of the Philippines. About the content in his article he says: “The truth is very important to me. In such a complicated matter as this, it is difficult enough to reach a level of reason. I am convinced that the rich western world is obliged to help the third world, e.g. Africa, Asia and Middle- and South America to get a decent democracy without corruption and poverty. If we in the Western world, will let the Philippines turn into chaos, it will influence the stability of the whole Region of East Asia in a very negative way”.