

Illogical Neutralism

By Honorable Eulogio Balao



SIA, before the second world war, was peopled by men who had by then grown rather docile and resigned to being ruled by foreign powers. Then the war isolated the colonies from their rulers. Left alone, each colony was forced to seek aid within itself. This contingency fused each fellow with his neighbor, until the colony became a social unit fired with one sentiment. Long-atrophied initiative and ingenuity were roused by long-lost unity and native interest in state affairs. All at once, throughout Asia, the colonized people became aware of their inherent power; that their existence did not, after all, flow from that of foreign masters. The events that happened soon after the war were inevitable — revolutions swept like wildfire throughout Asia and new republics were born. But even after becoming free, these people never lost the bad taste in their mouths. Unhappily, America whose clean record in this regard is well known to us, has been unjustly included with the taste, for it has always been associated with the former colonizers. Furthermore, the Asians, sensitive of their newly-realized rights claim that



America's attitude towards them leaves something to be desired.

At any rate, these small republics of Asia have grown suspicious of any foreign country that has enough strength to colonize. It is a natural consequence. They are naturally anxious to guard their new-found happiness. They are over-anxious in fact, and this has resulted in near-sightedness in the matter of forming international relations. They have gone to extremes, resorting to neutrality which we feel is wrong. Surely, any nation which affirms democracy as its guiding principle, as these nations do, cannot sincerely live neutrally. Neutrality in this fight, and with the main protagonists involved,



The Philippines is one of the signatories of the SEATO. In the case of young, and individually impotent republic, only collective action with SEATO member nations and other bigger free powers can offer satisfactory deterrent armed force.

manifests impulsiveness arising from baseless fears. And when that nation is weak, as these nations are, neutralism practically guarantees its death.

The neutralists claim that an alliance with America would invite Russian invasion. They claim this, even as their respective territories teem with Red subversives already implementing the same threat they are trying to forestall futilely by fence-sitting. With voices trembling with emotion, they avow sincere belief in America's anti-colonialism; in the next breath, they announce their desire to cultivate Russian friendship.

Why colonialism should, up to now, be associated only with the West is something we cannot comprehend. We can only understand it to mean lack of full appreciation of history, its shifts and motivations. Genghis Khan and his Asiatic hordes tried and succeeded in colonizing. Japan tried to do the same barely a decade ago but failed. Russia, that Asiatic country, has colonies right now. The spirit of colonialism does not arise from geographical or racial factors. It arises from the mind

which is modified by ideas, and nothing else. Today, no Western country would consider colonizing, for recent experiences have taught its impracticability, and the rest of the free world have been alerted to its basic dangers. To the Western World I dare say that colonialism is a museum-piece. Western colonialism went out of vogue with the downfall of monarchy and the want of lands to discover. Today, when democracy is the popular principle, only states governed by mad dictators and Communism is a new power, and it is essentially totalitarian in nature and experience shows that these particular conditions spawn forcible expansion.

If these new democracies find unequalled joy in their existence, does not human compassion and charity dictate that efforts be made to insure that their past sad fate not befall other countries? If these fence-sitters are sincere in their abhorrence of a colonialism, does it not follow that they should join the battle against it? Is not active participation in the fight against oppression the only moral and ethical way?

They claim that they only need economic and technical aid to strengthen their resistance to Communism. But economic stability cannot be attained overnight. You cannot hurry up the land. You cannot take a people bowed by foreign rule for years and transform them in one sweep into spirits capable of producing an industrial revolution. Meanwhile, as steps are being taken to attain economic stability, Communism



is trying its best to take over the country.

While they are forming a non-military, spiritual and economic bulwark against Red oppression, they expect the Communists to leave them alone. Thus, they dismiss the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization



Photo above shows military top brass briefing the President on the result of the recently concluded SEATO meeting at Singapore.

so long as it has provisions for military defense. It is not the defense of actual battlefields which call for local counter-attacks along the line whenever pressed. All we signatories hope for is to stabilize present conditions and present boundaries. Our democratic principles, being against aggression in any form, cannot provide otherwise. All it can allow us to do is fence our land while we till it and fill our granaries. At this stage of the game there can be no substitute for security backed by military power. Security backed by sincere friendship is ideal, but sin-



Map shows spread of communist menace in Southeast Asia.

cerity is a virtue which has yet to gain entrance into the communists' soul. Korea and Vietnam showed that only armed force can stop Communism's march. And in the case of young, and individually impotent republics, only collective action with each other and with bigger free nations can offer satisfactory deterrent armed force.

We SEATO signatories have also been blamed for increasing the tension in Asia. How can our critics be so blind to the illegal military buildup in North Korea and North Vietnam? How can they be deaf to the reports of their own military leaders of the exploits of local Communist agents? It is we, on the other hand, who are trying to reduce the tension.

The status quo involves an aggressive communist bloc; an unselfish America whose hand, it seems, is being constantly bitten by those it feeds; the neutralists whose heads are way up in the clouds without having their feet planted firmly on

the ground; and small nations like the Philippines who have tasted freedom, liked it so much that they suffered defending it and consequently know how to insure its permanence.

There is no choice for the Philippines but to join the SEATO. It was a dynamic anti-communist gesture and we are proud of it. We have high hopes, and we take pride in not having attempted to meet extinction squatting on our haunches.

We choose to align ourselves with the other SEATO nations, because it is the only honorable and sincere way; the only move in keeping with the dynamic spirit of freedoms' heroes whose deeds form our guiding heritage. We choose to take sides because only in doing so can our existence be guaranteed. We choose sides because we are a people who would like to continue worshipping our own God, and give posterity the wholesome life that communism can never hope to offer.