

# A GOOD FILIPINO

By TON THAT THIEN

When the convicts in some penitentiary in the United States « offered » their services for the war in Vietnam, many of us frowned, and only frowned because the proposal came from the convicts themselves. What was proposed was not very intelligent, but that was understandable. If the guys were intelligent, they would not have sat in jails as « cons » (that is the American abbreviation for convicts). And many Vietnamese must have sighed of relief when the US Government gave no blessing to the proposal.

But last week similar proposal was made, this time some six thousand miles West of the Californian coast, and in a very respectable house : the House of Representatives of the Republic of the Philippines. And the proposal did not come from any « Cons » but from a Professor and a member of the Philippine Congress. Never mind their names. The proposal was to send Filipino convicts to Vietnam instead of Philippine troops.

Now, the Philippine troops will represent the Philippines, since they will come here in the name of that country. But whom will the convicts represent? Obviously the people of the Philippines cannot give them the status of representatives of their nation. Otherwise it would be impossible to explain why the Philippine nation has put those men in jail. They are outlaws because they have stayed outside Philippine law. Now they are being made respectable; that is if the proposal went unopposed.

Fortunately there are people who have some thought for the image of the Philippines abroad. One of those good Filipinos is Mr. Salipada Pendatun. Representative Pendatun saved the good name of the Philippines by opposing the proposal. It is true that he was thinking of the good image of the Philippines and not of that of Vietnam. But that is good enough. It saved our Government the trouble of having to say NO to a proposal which amounts to turning Vietnam into a dumping ground for Filipino social rubbish.

And surely our Government, just as the other governments which have sent their fine men to fight in Vietnam, will have to say No too. For if the Philippine « Cons » are sent here, they would really be in an embarrassing situation : they would be the allies of what Philippine society has rejected as acceptable members of it. Birds of the same feathers flock together. Surely the U. S. Marines, Infantry, Cavalry, Air Force, Navy, Special Forces, the Koreans, the Australian and New Zealand elite troops, AND the ARVN cannot consider themselves as wearing the same feathers as the Filipino convicts.

After all, the Vietnam war is a revolutionary war. And one cannot win a revolutionary war by enlisting the services of people officially declared criminals by their own Government !

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