

A handful of prominent women will not prove that all women have been liberated, just as a handful of rich people in any country will not indicate that all the inhabitants enjoy a respectable standard of living. A country is really prosperous when all the inhabitants without exception enjoy the rights claimed for them in the U.N. Charter. On the contrary, when wealth and freedom are monopolized by a minority group, this constitutes a form of injustice which is a cause of complaint all over the world.

In the Philippines, as in South Korea and Indonesia, prostitution is a flourishing trade. Its tools are the so-called "sex-tours" and the night clubs where young girls are used to entertain passengers and customers. To the same category of exploitation centers, belong the "friendship clubs" represented by agencies and offices in charge of marrying young girls or selling them by correspondence. These clubs are numerous in Manila where they maintain relationships with correspondents from several countries or choose to specialize in one country. Their customers are Japanese, American, European or Australian. Prostitution is considered illegal in the above countries, yet it continues to be a prosperous trade, yielding huge profits to its dealers. The latter are the owners of night clubs, the organizers of sex-tours, the keepers of cabarets, where customers are provided with illustrated pamphlets and folders containing ample information and attractive photographs of young girls who are ready for marriage or for sale at reasonable prices. Every one interested is invited to choose the girl who meets his desire through her picture and her qualifications and the agreement is made on the spot.

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## Sex Tours "in the Far East"

Within the period which followed the proclamation of the Philippines' independence, 1946, the country became one of the few states where a woman occupied the highest position in the Government. Corazon Aquino was elected president of the republic in 1984. If we also mention that the Philippine women include hundreds of physicians, business managers, university professors, and that they form two thirds of the law students in the country, we might conclude, from the above facts, that the Philippine woman has achieved a high degree of freedom and modernism. But other facts, unfortunately, contradict this conclusion.

What is it that induces a European or an American to own a young girl from the Far East? Factors are varied. One of them is the infatuation that a foreigner arouses in another foreigner. Just as the oriental girl is attracted to the blue-eyed, fair-skinned occidental. Aside from his money, the European or American fellow is attracted by the black eyes, soft hair and brown skin of the Oriental woman, and the stories he hears about her easy temper and submissive character. Among the candidates, there may be the man in need of a servant to take care of him in his old age or who suffers from chronic disease and requires a nurse to look permanently after him.

Australians constitute the largest number of Philippin marriage customers. More than 2000 of them are wedded yearly to Philippin girls in this odd manner. It is noteworthy that the delegate of the Australian Government, who is in charge of checking the marriage requests and contracts, encourages these marriages for humanitarian purposes. "Every couple", he says, "send to the Philippines \$ 100 per month, a large sum when we consider the extreme poverty of most of the inhabitants." This is particularly manifest in the overpopulated villages covered with slums, where dirty water flows into the streets and the mountains of refuse are invaded by thousands of diggers looking for valuable or usable material they may dig out of the rubbish.

Philippin women are generally eager to marry foreigners who would bring them wealth, provide their parents with financial help or carry them into dreamland, where they would experience a new birth. The educated girl who holds school diplomas is anxious to have a wealthy and honest husband whose education



Corazon Aquino, president of the Philippines.

is equivalent or superior to hers. Are these mixed marriages successful? The answer is in most cases negative.

Many contracts lead to disappointment, especially when the occidental husband, who imagines that every Philippin woman is submissive and tender-hearted, discovers that she is stubborn and strong-minded. According to Alice Lamigo, President of a woman's association in that country, the proportion of successful marriages of this kind does not exceed 30%. Yet the disappointed wife resorts to patience and finds compensation in the money she sends to her parents. In rare cases, she decides to retrace to her homeland.

The feminist movement tries to lend a helping hand. This movement is represented by Sister Mary Soledad Perpignan, who has been struggling to free her country women from exploitation. She has warned them against believing stories they hear about the loyalty of the occidental husband and his good treatment of his wife. Many of those men, she affirms, beat their wives or repudiate them.

Sister Mary presides over a group of women who strongly claim the abolition of sex-tours organized by the Japanese in the Philippine Islands. In 1981, when the Japanese Prime Minister Suzuki visited the Philippines, he was interviewed by Sister Soledad who exposed to him the problem. Since then, the tours were reduced in number but not abolished. Philippin girls continued to be sent to Japan where they were treated as prostitutes under the guise of dancers and singers in public places. Marcos, former President of the Philippines, was the first man responsible for the spread of prostitution and white slave trade in his country. He used them to cover his debts and his extravagant expenses. But Sister Soledad followed up the problem when Aquino came to power. The new President promised to take the necessary measures to prevent white slavery, to control the process of sending dancers and artists to Japan and to inspect cafés and pleasure resorts established by foreigners in Manila.

With the coming of Aquino, Philippin women have great hopes for their future.

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