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The CIA Plans Ahead

As the political crisis of the Marcos regime intensifies, the Central Intelligence Agency is enlisting the assistance, sometimes unwitting, of Philippine scholars in the United States to help identify U.S. policy options.

In 1982, the CIA hired the consulting firm of Booz, Allen, Hamilton, Inc., to contact a number of Philippine specialists and offer them sizable fees to participate in a study of "political stability" in the Philippines. One academic who was approached said Booz, Allen offered to fly him to Washington for "consultations."

"They were especially interested in my knowlege of the Church and various groups within it," said the scholar, who requested anonymity. "But I was bothered by the huge sums of money they were offering and couldn't get a clear picture of who was funding the whole thing."

Not every academic was so finicky. Justin Green, professor of political science at Villanova University, agreed to play ball with the CIA. In January 1983, he started distributing questionnaires to Philippine scholars. In none of the requests did he mention that the project was being funded by the CIA. In fact, he tried to convey the impression that the whole thing was an academic exercise.

"I am asking for scholarly help where you feel you can help as a fellow scholar," Green wrote to one colleague. The questionnaire concentrated on eliciting information about the strength and composition of the New People's Army (NPA), the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines and part of the broad opposition National Democratic Front. The instruction sheet of the questionnaire informed the specialists that "by answering the following questions, you will be providing information on the NPA that we have not been able to find elsewhere."

Green also attempted to arrange a special panel on "The Future of Philippine Politics—What Happens After Marcos?" at last summer's conference in Athens, Ohio, of the Philippine Studies Committee, a branch of the Association of Asian Studies. He sent invitations to Philippine scholars Robert Youngblood of the University of Arizona at Tempe; Ben Muego of Bowling Green University; David Wurfel of the University of Windsor; Belinda Aquino of the University of Hawaii, and Carl Lande and Linda Richter of the University of Kansas.

Green again failed to mention that he was doing CIA-funded research. His written description of the project, however, suggests the political nature of such panels: "[We] might discuss various scenarios regarding when and how Marcos might leave, the state of the various oppositions, possible successor regimes and what this might mean to domestic and international futures and how these might be affected by external events, U.S. activity, and the changing Philippine domestic scene."

The panel never came off. Green's involvement in CIA-funded research was exposed, and he publicly acknowledged his role at the summer conference in Ohio. Before the conference, he tried to defend his actions. "The work I am doing for Booz, Allen is legitimate scholarship," he wrote to Ron Edgerton, head of the Philippine Studies Committee. "I don't feel guilty taking CIA money to further a legitimate scholarly endeavor." But in a subsequent letter to his colleagues, Green expressed a change of heart: "There is a snake in the garden of Eden and I think we must exorcise it."

—W.B.

(This account of the CIA's venture into Philippine studies appeared in somewhat different form in The Progressive Review, a political quarterly at Princeton University.)

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