

PEACE, THE PEACE CORPS AND THE PHILIPPINES

Lawrence C. Howard

IN THE LIGHT of advanced publicity perhaps I should say a word about the title of these remarks: "Peace, the Peace Corps, and the Philippines." Unfortunately, the title preceded the assembly of the text. To a large extent, fortunately, the title retains some relevance. I have addressed myself to four topics. First I want to call your attention to the dangerous threat of war. Then I will turn briefly to the nature of peace. My third section attempts to relate the Peace Corps to the movement for peace. Finally, I will allude to the experience volunteers are having in the Philippines.

The Peace Corps is only beginning to learn about peace. We would not qualify for an honor's prize today. We are still apprentices, still learning. It's because we're still groping that I'm grateful for this opportunity to talk with you about peace. It forces me to focus on the idea of peace and to reflect with you about it. As we have gone only a little way towards peace, it hurts very much to be jostled with the comment: "Oh, you've come to bring us peace? What about Cuba? What about Mississippi!" Peace is crucial for Cuba and Mississippi. Perhaps our experience here may make it more possible there.

Rather, instead of bringing peace, we are pursuing it. Our efforts can be better understood if highlighted against the backdrop of four great struggles that have dominated human imagination and purpose throughout history:

The struggle for mastery over nature—for subsistence.

The struggle for freedom and growth.

The struggle for human distinction—for excellence.

The struggle against war.

None of these struggles has been won. The last one, against war, is the only one, however, where man has dangerously lost ground. "Man today is not safe in the presence of man." We still need the basic primer for the end of hostility to prevent man's extermination. If we can structure peace then these other struggles can be pushed:

mastery over nature, the pursuit of freedom and excellence—all leading to a meaningful life.

Its terrifyingly urgent that "we study war no more." While Geneva conferees fiddle over three on-site inspections or seven, the arsenal of warheads, missiles, germs, and gases mounts. Time runs out. Each moment brings closer further loss of control with the attainment of a nuclear capacity by other sovereign states. In any war between nuclear powers the main casualty will be humanity.

Two recent books underline the dangers of a thermonuclear war: *In Place of Folly* by Norman Cousins, and *The Arms Race* by Nobel Peace Prize winner, Philip Noel-Baker. These remarks borrow liberally from both. The theme of each is man's having in reach the power to decimate—to destroy the larger part of—the human species.

Within an hour a big part of the world's population can be annihilated, the species' genes can be mutated through radiation, the Darwinian assent can be reversed and man's vital environment (the air, the water and the land) can be polluted.

Consider how ominous the dangers. A combination of 12,500 megatons of thermonuclear explosions would bring on the disaster. That much explosive power at this very moment may be aloft in American B-52s or Russian Migs. It's certainly beneath the sea in atom powered submarines or loaded on missile launchers for ICBMs. All are zeroed-in on key population centers. If released today, by nightfall they would devastate North America. Two weeks of fallout would wipe out most of the people north of the equator. Those who would survive would rebuild amid ruins in a polluted atmosphere. They would have to begin by reconstructing nature herself.

Beyond the thermonuclear are chemical, biological and radiological warfare. Earlier generations have had the power merely to affect history; ours has the power to erase it.

The core of our crisis is uncontrolled power. In our own lifespan man has brought about more fundamental changes than in all recorded history: There is conquest of the earth's gravity (the satellites), liberation of atomic energy, abolition of distance, instantaneous communication, automation. Unprecedented are the scale and intensity of scientific development. Forces and processes now coming under human control begin to match, in size and intensity, nature herself. Our total environment is within man's power to influence. At the same time the world has been shrunk to a single neigh-

borhood. With nuclear power under control, man could turn his attention to the unfinished business: the struggles to adjust and distinguish himself in this environment. With nuclear power out of control man seems doomed. This could be the last generation of men on earth. Survival requires leaders who will love humanity the way Gandhi loved India. It also requires followers who are furnished at least a primer on peace.

The Nature of Peace

The word "peace" like the word "university" is a multi-faceted, demanding word—only more so. Peace is the end of pain, the beginning of promise, the concern of states but no less of individuals. The Latin *pax* focuses upon peace as the end to national hostilities. It is an agreement between warring states. Peace in our time must begin to abolish war through arms controls.

Peace at the individual level means quietude, a tranquility. This is a New Testament theme. Tranquility is the gift of God, a blessing which gives man an inner wholeness. It is a freedom from personal anxiety. Man craves this peace.

Peace also has more active meanings. Like prayer, peace changes things. The Hebrew word for peace, *shalom*, conveys this positive quality. *Shalom* means the absence of strife; but it also implies good health, prosperity, well-being. It is the fruit of a right relationship with God.

Still more basic than *shalom*, more desirable than even the masterful control of passion, is that peace defined as the right direction of man's energies, tensions and passions both individually and in the aggregate. The tone here is Asian. It makes a blessedness out of tension as well as Faith. Real peace is a function of being—when you be what you are to be. In essence it is an affirmation of man as he is to be.

The chapters of the primer for peace would thus encompass all man's struggles: Toward ending national hostility; the elimination of destructive disturbances; achieving mastery over nature; building man's freedom and excellence; and finally meaning in the good life.

The pages of such primer must contain human experiences born of the search for peace. This brings us to the Peace Corps and peace.

The Peace Corps and Peace

The intention of the Peace Corps is peace. It is the desire to

expose an entire generation to peace. The authorizing Act declares United States policy to be to promote world peace and friendship through a Peace Corps. Peace is a high American purpose. Eight hundred Americans volunteer every day to work for peace. Nearly 5,000 are already overseas. The largest number is in the Philippines.

Yet the word "peace" comes hard for Americans. We have fostered no peace movement such as those in England or Japan. Pacifists are to be found in the United States but they are written off as radicals. Personal tranquility is not a common American commodity. In fact, most Americans would prefer to qualify the word peace with "peace in freedom," or "peace with justice."

It is in the cause of peace with freedom that we stockpile armaments and resume nuclear testing. Americans have accepted the burden of 55 billion dollars for military defense. Aid to education, uplifting depressed areas, improving the care for the aged (that is, an affirmation of natural man), by contrast, find tough sledding in Congress. It is in the same context of freedom that we now re-evaluate aid to the Philippines and consider its reduction.

I'm frankly worried about the President Kennedy's strategy of peace. He says:

Our task is to rebuild our strength, and the strength of the Free World—to prove to the Soviets that time and the course of history are not on their side, that the balance of power is not shifting their way. First, we must make invulnerable a nuclear retaliatory power second to none. It must be based on hidden, moving, or invulnerable weapons in such force as to deter any aggressor from threatening an attack he knows could not destroy enough of our force to prevent his own destruction.

This kind of policy is seriously disturbing. I believe there can be no adequate defense for humanity in a policy of deterrence through ever expanding armaments. Will not such a policy only prompt an enemy to improve his own capability? Will he not seek to muster the power to deliver the decisive nuclear blow before retaliation is possible?

Meanwhile, precious moments slip away, we develop a bomb-shelter hysteria at home (men arm against their neighbor), and the possibility of accidentally triggering off nuclear warfare increases.

But after achieving adequate strength, the President does go on to a positive program. He would greatly increase the flow of capital abroad, perhaps more as loans than as grants. He would make an

honest effort to close the economic gap between the "have" and the "have-not" nations. He proposes a new approach to the world's tension areas. He would recognize national aspirations and would display a respect for cultural differences. He understands that one of the world's greatest needs is to have an America that understands the world.

The Peace Corps is thus part of the President's initiative—toward peace. This approach is new. We are not an adjunct of the cold war struggle; neither are we associated with the Disarmament Agency or the program of Atoms for Peace or Food for Peace. The Corps is separated from these traditional efforts to beat swords into ploughshares. This is basically a person-to-person program aimed to promote mutual understanding. It is designed to be at least as rewarding to ourselves as to participating nations. But whatever the national gain for ourselves or for the Philippines, we hope that our greatest contribution will be toward world peace.

This is a new means of representing America abroad. It hopes to establish a new image. We hope that by living with others who are different, by sharing their struggles, by trying to understand their culture, ideals, and ambitions, we will create a new impression of America abroad. As Senator Humphrey* put it:

This is what the world wants more than America's money or even more than it wants her technology. It wants from America the reassurance that we believe in people.

We are also striving to make a contribution to development. We want to do what host countries determine and to do it under their supervision and control. The skills that volunteers have to offer are limited by their age and experience. They are middle level skills, neither technical nor manual. They involve working *with* people, not over them; providing living testimony of a reverence for man and his labor and the human responsibility to work with those who are in need. In the Philippines, we're mostly educational aides in barrio elementary schools.

The principle of volunteering is central. This is a private commitment to which each volunteer must re-commit himself every day. One volunteer has explained his motivation: "I've been sitting on the sidelines all my life and watching the world go to pot. No one ever asked me to help until the Peace Corps came along."

* Senator Hubert H. Humphrey of Minnesota.

This is not a program of Americans crusading for democracy, but of democrats crusading for the advancement of human welfare, for the realization of the aspirations of all peoples. This is our job. Other by-products are possible: maybe the basis for a broadly redefined foreign policy outlook for America; maybe a transformed America with new and strengthened ideals. But to think of the Peace Corps simply as part of the United States government is to weaken and defeat its purpose. It is much better to think of the Peace Corps and the Philippines. For in the struggle for peace, nationalities are relevant only for the uniting of diverse experiences to highlight our common humanity.

... *And the Philippines*

There is much about peace to be learned in the Philippines. Whenever I tell someone in Manila that I'm from the provinces, from Dumaguete, they invariably say, "That's a peaceful place!" Life in the barrios, where most volunteers are assigned, is peaceful. The largest Peace Corps contingents are in peaceful places: in Nigeria, Ethiopia, and the Philippines. All three have long non-aggressive histories, all are strategically located in the north-south, east-west axis of separated peoples. All three are polyglots. Nigeria and Ethiopia's roots are Mediterranean and Middle Eastern as well as African. The Philippines is an amalgamation of Asia, Europe and America. All three accommodate Christian, Moslem and pagan. All have much to teach the world about peace.

This is a compelling time to be in the Philippines! There is hope in the air and development is on the move. Here, there are pioneering experiments in rural reconstruction, in community development, in education for economic growth! There is also a move towards moral regeneration.

Here, too, are vivid negatives: the destructiveness of feeling inferior, peacelessness in asserted absolute sovereignty, the self-defeat of economic isolation.

Far more dramatic, however, are the positives here: patience, reciprocity, hospitality, a concern for the human factor in personal relations. Surely, if the world is to survive, it must become rather more like the Filipino who is unalterably Eastern but yet very much Western. Looking at the Filipino's love of family perhaps the world will see more closely the family of man.

The experience of the first groups of volunteers, now completing

their overseas tours, confirms for me that the Philippines has provided the Peace Corps volunteer with a clearer view of peace.

Away from America, one can see the need to build a structured peace through a strengthened United Nations. Enforceable disarmament through a world authority to undercut even our own absolute national sovereignty takes on high priority.

In the Philippines, the struggle for mastery over nature is graphically depicted. We have learned that a world approach to the problem of development is clearly preferable to the tyrannies and indignities of bilateral aid. Living here, one can see the importance of ending the wastage of natural resources and the spoilage of the soil. No longer will references to population pressures mean just alarming statistics. Passing through Manila is vivid illustration (even nearly two decades later) of what the devastation of war can be and how we could be involved. Here one also learns that although man's habit of violence is bad, so too is disconnectedness from other men.

Here the ancient struggles of man to master his environment for us have thus taken on reality. The cause of freedom, we now know, is only an experiment limited to a narrow privileged class. Most of the world is still stranger to the written word. Formal education is available only to a minority. Excellence in education is not yet defined or even desired.

But mainly the Philippines has been for us a setting for self-discovery. Perhaps we have learned most about peace by seeing ourselves for the first time reflected in the lives of people in our barrios or at our schools. Volunteers in this region just finished an End of Tour Questionnaire. Nearly everyone said that personal development was the most dramatic result of his stay thus far; some underlined a deep spiritual awakening. As to contributions to peace, most mentioned a better understanding of others, a respect for cultural differences.

One volunteer said:

Being here has made me realize that it doesn't take too much effort to love people. I think universal and eternal love are the ingredients of peace.

Another:

We've made some progress towards peace if people I've associated with have the same frustrations I have.

Yesterday morning's mail brought this from another volunteer:

To communicate with one another, if we are to know each other well, is imperative, but extremely difficult. I may use words that have to you a different significance from mine. Understanding comes when we, you and I, meet on the same level at the same time. That happens only when there is real affection between people, between intimate friends. There is an art too to listening. It requires putting to one side all prejudices, preformulations and daily activities. In a receptive state of mind, things can be understood. Unfortunately most of us listen through a screen.

One is aware without too much discussion, that there is unnecessary individual as well as collective chaos, confusion and misery throughout the world. Is it not also obvious that what I am in my relationship to another creates society and that without radically transforming myself there can be no transformation of the world. Until I, in my relationship to you, understand myself, I am the cause of the chaos, the fear, the misery and destruction.

In the Philippines, Peace Corps volunteers, I would say, are coming to know about peace.