

The Naturalization Process and the Chinese in the Philippines

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A policy impact of the opening up of diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China in 1975 was an attempt by the Philippines to resolve the status of its overseas Chinese residents. Decrees were issued making it possible for the ethnic Chinese to acquire Philippine citizenship. Far from being passive, the ethnic Chinese also had a role in clarifying or revising the decrees signed by the President. The problems in securing naturalization were examined including the changes made in facilitating the process. The policy implications of naturalization relate to the status, privileges, and benefits attendant to the acquisition of Philippine citizenship.

Among the countries in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) region, the Philippines has the smallest proportion of ethnic Chinese. The Chinese as an ethnic minority group comprise only 650,000 or about 1.6 percent of the Philippine population. However, the size of the ethnic minority does not reveal its importance. It is the issue of the legal status of this minority group that occupies the mind of the Filipino public which is skeptical of the accuracy of statistics. For long, the public has viewed the issue of the "overstaying Chinese" as a serious one to mull over, yet remaining un-

resolved.¹ There has always lingered a relationship based on hate, prejudice, distrust, and envy between the ethnic Chinese and the Filipinos. Fortunately, this relationship until fairly recently has not been characterized by bloodshed and riots, although history is replete with accounts about massacres, violence, intimidation, and other physical abuses. The last recorded event of large-scale abuse was during World War II when Filipinos looted Chinese owned stores. Today, the rela-

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¹The term "Overstaying Chinese" refers in particular to some 2,000 persons who came to the Philippines as visitors or tourists and stayed beyond their allowed permits to visit. Their status was resolved by an order of President Marcos in 1973 which allocated the unfilled immigration quota for Chinese to this category of aliens. Subsequently, the application of immigrant visas was facilitated to this group by waving the requirement that such visas be obtained abroad (See P.D. No. 298, Series 1973; P.D. No. 419, Series 1974 and P.D. No. 730, Series 1975).

tionship between the two groups is one of accomodation, but the mutual suspicion has persisted and recrimination has taken a subtle form. Force has been replaced by the use of law to discriminate against the Chinese.²

The ethnic Chinese are known as overstaying aliens, illegal entrants, dangerous aliens, urban capitalists, and other descriptions connoting that the Chinese do not have any political and legal basis for residence in the Philippines. Indeed, many of those who originally came to the Philippines were traveling traders, migratory workers, recruits of colonial governments, refugees, and, in the later years, as transients and tourists who over-extended their stay. Others did enter the country through the back door in Mindanao or Northern Luzon. Since strict immigration laws and limited quotas (50 a year) bar the Chinese from entering the country, not many of the present Chinese can claim valid or legal basis for their residence. This is a limited and formalistic view, however.

Restrictive legislations were passed to constrict the activities of the Chinese, particularly in commerce and agriculture. The retail trade was nationalized, rice and corn milling was removed from the controls of the Chinese, market spaces were curtailed, vegetable gardening declared off limits

to Chinese, and so on. These actions were taken in the face of the prevailing view that the Chinese controlled the economy of the Philippines. This was also the period of intense nationalism when the country was recovering from the ravages of the war and steering itself after achieving independence. Applying for citizenship was nearly impossible for the average Chinese who could not afford the prohibitive costs involved and could not meet the stringent requirements. Aside from the passage of laws and issuance of administrative rulings, the interpretation of these legal orders was also made consistent with the policy of restriction. Peck evaluated the performance of the Supreme Court in the Philippines noting that the Court issued decisions on citizenship cases narrowly and strictly based on nationalism.³ The Court practically closed all the avenues towards the acquisition of citizenship. The opportunity to secure Philippine citizenship was available only to the very rich who could afford the costs involved as well as the bribe money collected by government officials.

The status of the Chinese in the Philippines has similarities with that of the Jews in Poland.⁴ In fact, in one account, a King of Thailand once called the Overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia as the Jews of the East.⁵ In making a comparison, Eitzen found

²See Charles Coppel, "The Position of the Chinese in the Philippines, Malaysia and Indonesia," in *Minority Rights Group, The Chinese in Indonesia, the Philippines and Malaysia* (London: Minority Rights Group, June 1972). Also Cornelius J. Peck, "Nationalistic Influences on the Philippine Law of Citizenship," *The American Journal of Comparative Law*, Vol. 14 (Summer 1965).

³Peck, *ibid.*, p. 478.

⁴D. Stanley Eitzen, "Two Minorities: The Jews of Poland and the Chinese of the Philippines," *Jewish Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 10, No. 2, (December 1968).

⁵Sarasin Viraphol, *The Nanyang Chinese* (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University, 1972), p. 9.

that both the Chinese and the Jews have been targets of discriminatory practices. As a consequence, both minorities have responded with parallel defensive attitudes and refusal to be assimilated into the dominant social life. According to Eitzen, this situation further reinforces the discrimination and prejudice towards them by the majority population.⁶ The Chinese have limited social interaction with Filipinos. The former are drawn together by their own cultural pride, experience of humiliation, distrust of the Filipinos, and relative isolation. In the end, they do not wish to commingle or even to integrate with the larger community.

Discrimination by the Filipinos has also been a carry-over from colonial experience. During the Spanish colonial rule (1501-1898), the Chinese traders and settlers were confined to an area outside the walls of Manila. This area in Manila was called the *parian* designed for ease of control over the Chinese "infidels" since they were not Christians, and to minimize their contact with the Filipinos. The idea of a *parian* and, subsequently, the Chinatowns in cities, is claimed by Zarco as a ghetto which is the "bulwark of resistance to assimilation."⁷ This Chinese concentration with its own supportive institutions reduced the interactions — except in commercial transactions — with the Filipinos. However, Zarco seems uncertain about his observation in which

he implies or prescribes the "elimination of ghettos in order to assimilate the local Chinese." Yet in his conclusion the author affirms that once ghettos are dissolved, "assimilation would be accomplished fairly easily."⁸ Seen in a larger context, there has been a change in the spatial concentration of the Chinese in a fairly limited and contiguous area in cities.⁹ Increasingly, the Chinese have moved away from the highly congested and rapidly deteriorating building structures in Chinatown towards the suburbs of Manila. The more affluent have resided alongside the rich Filipinos in luxurious walled-in housing enclaves, such as Forbes Park, and Dasmariñas Village.

If there seems to be a discernible pattern for the ethnic Chinese not to concentrate in a defined area, is there a change in the basic social attitudes among them? How does spatial location alter relationships between the Chinese and the Filipinos? Will the Chinese now blend easily with the larger community? Will the Filipinos view them as less exclusive and dominant in commerce if there is reduced visibility of the Chinese as a group concentrated in an area? These are points to be explored.

This paper focuses on the 1975 naturalization policy which was introduced by the Philippine govern-

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 222.

⁶ Eitzen, *op. cit.*, p. 231.

⁷ Ricardo M. Zarco, "The Chinese Family Structure," in Alfonso Felix, Jr. (ed.), *The Chinese in the Philippines, 1570-1770*, Vol. I (Manila: Solidaridad Publishing House, 1966), p. 218.

⁹ See Jacques Amyot, "The Chinese Community of Manila: A Study of Adaptation of Chinese Familism to the Philippine Environment" (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1960). Also see Daniel F. Doeppers, "Ethnicity and Class Structure of Philippine Cities" (Ph. D. dissertation, Syracuse University, 1972).

ment avowedly to make possible the integration of the Chinese into the body politic. A number of queries are raised: What does naturalization infer or bestow on the ethnic Chinese? Is it merely a legal solution to a historical, social and economic issue? What are its social implications? Will the ethnic Chinese bond remain or will naturalization bring about a divisive Chinese community? The paper seeks to examine the goals — if any — of the ethnic Chinese with regards to naturalization and to discuss the strategies available to them in pursuing such goals.

Legal Basis

In 1975, President Marcos issued Letter of Instructions (L.O.I.) No. 270 directing his administration to encourage and facilitate the acquisition of Philippine citizenship to deserving and qualified Chinese residents. The purpose of this order was to make it possible, easier and affordable for the Chinese to apply for citizenship. These developments may be viewed in the light of President Marcos being about to embark on a state visit to China that year. Essentially, the presidential order on naturalization under the martial law society carries the same provisions for the qualifications and disqualifications of applicants as mandated during the period of the Philippine Republic.¹⁰ The old provisions were so stringent

that Amyot predicted:

Even if all Philippine Chinese desired to become naturalized citizens, the requirements are such that very few could hope to succeed.¹¹

In addition, Felix observed that most of the low-income Chinese had no chance to apply at all. He wrote cogently:

... only the wealthy can be integrated into our society; that we do not wish to integrate the masses of poor Chinese who cannot afford it. But we ought to secure the loyalty of all: of the baker, the carpenter, the iron worker, the great majority who cannot afford the expense of naturalization as it now is.¹²

Under L.O.I. No. 270, the Chinese applicants must meet all the qualifications and must not have any of the disqualifications for naturalization. A Special Committee on Naturalization — composed of the Solicitor General, the Under secretary of Foreign Affairs, and the Director of the National Intelligence and Security Agency — was set up to establish the guidelines, devise the forms, and fix the required fees. Presidential orders which followed L.O.I. No. 270 are L.O.I. No. 491, approved in December 1976, which extended the deadline for application to 31 March 1977 and amended some of the requirements; L.O.I. No. 283 which waived the requirements for college students who are above twenty-one years of age and extended the June 1975 deadline of the Special Committee to 15 July 1975; and L.O.I.

¹⁰For a summary of the provisions before Martial Law, see Jacques Amyot, *The Chinese and National Integration in Southeast Asia* (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University, 1972), pp. 33-35.

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 35.

¹²Felix, Jr., (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 10-11.

No. 292 signed in July 1975 which facilitated the change of Chinese names into Filipino names. Note that L.O.I.s. were issued, not presidential decrees. Under martial law society, a L.O.I. simply reiterates an existing law or decree and directs officials or agencies to implement it. A decree is a new law or policy itself which is the basis and authority for a decision. The difference is not entirely clear since the L.O.I. issued on the naturalization process has also acquired the strength of law. The former has made fundamental and technical changes without the benefit of a decree. However, it should be pointed out that the purpose of the L.O.I. is to provide the President with the review process and a recommendation of the list of deserving applicants who will be granted citizenship through a decree signed by the President.

By the end of the 31 March 1977 deadline, only a limited number of ethnic Chinese applied. In one estimate, only three percent of the ethnic Chinese had applied. Of those who applied for naturalization, some 21,000 have received their citizenship by decree. In view of the small turnout, another presidential order was issued in May 1978 in an attempt to relax the procedures and encourage more ethnic Chinese to apply. Under this order, some 9,000 ethnic Chinese were able to acquire citizenship.¹³

An ultimatum was issued to the effect that should the Chinese remain indecisive about their citizenship status (whether to take up Filipino or Chinese

citizenship), the Philippine government will declare them as stateless.¹⁴

Many of those who adopted a wait-and-see attitude had to face three consequences. The ethnic Chinese had to choose Filipino citizenship, give up their passports from Taiwan and accept Chinese citizenship (mainland China), or become stateless persons. However, the People's Republic of China disagrees with the use of duress, force, and intimidation in settling the citizenship status of the Overseas Chinese. China, in a declared policy "supports and encourages Overseas Chinese to opt voluntarily for the nationality and citizenship of the country in which they have made a new home."¹⁵ The Philippine government took a discrete, flexible, and accommodating stance on the issue. In practice though, the fixed deadlines or ultimatum -- which changed three times -- took the form of a subtle imposition. For this reason also, the Philippines had exhausted its own patience and had to resort to declaring an ultimatum.

By June 1980 there were 43,180 applications (exclusive of minor children) for naturalization of which 26,308 were approved, or a substantial majority of the applicants (see Table 1). In the case of the minor children, of the 13,697 children who were petitioned 80 percent were approved in 1980. During a five-years period, the special committee on naturalization granted naturalization to a total of 37,286 individuals (the com-

¹³ Nelly Sindayen, "Manila Flies the Flag of Unity," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, Vol. 100, No. 24 (June 16, 1978), p. 23.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

¹⁵ *Peking Review* (July 7, 1978), p. 23.

Table 1. Status of Naturalization Cases, By Decree
(June 30, 1980)

Naturalization	L.O.I. 270 ⁻ P.D. 725		Legal Source:		
	L.O.I. 491		P.D. 836 (Wives)	P.D. 836 ⁻	(Minor Children)
				No. of Petitions	No. of Children
Applications	38,853	798	3,529	4,446	13,697
Approvals by Year					
1975	2,802	55			
1976	8,301	176		349	1,195
1977	5,295	61	153	333	1,044
1978	188	183	670	1,533	4,923
1979	3,794	57	561	648	1,961
1980	3,850	20	142	604	1,855
Total	24,230	552	1,526	3,467	10,978
Percent Ap- proved/Appli- cations	62.4	69.2	43.2	78.0	80.0

Source: Ministry of Justice, Special Committee on Naturalization,
Republic of the Philippines.

bined original applicants, wives, and children) leaving 19,591 pending applications. The only application rejected involved a case of outright bribery of an officer of the special committee. While the review process took longer than expected, in the aggregate the approval record was greater than previous naturalization proceedings. In 1974, for example, there were only 37 naturalization applications granted (see Table 2). After the new citizenship policy, there were 2,802 naturalization applications approved in 1975 (see Table 1). The rejection record was obviously high prior to the 1975 naturalization policy, in fact an all time high of 67.4 percent rejection was reached in 1973.

When a new batch of applications was approved and released to the public in June 1980, a Manila newspaper published an editorial hailing the Marcos policy as a "respect for human rights." The editorial noted that the policy "strengthens the nation" by giving the new citizens an "incentive to become more productive" in society and that the ethnic Chinese were being "admitted into the mainstream of the national life."¹⁶ While the newspaper agreed with the grant of citizenship to those who were already in the Philippines, it also argued for more caution in accepting new immigrants to the country.

¹⁶ *Bulletin Today* (June 18, 1980), p. 6.

Table 2. Naturalization of Aliens in the Philippines, 1969-1974

Year	Naturalization		Total	% Granted	% Denied
	Granted	Denied			
1969	66	23	89	74.2	25.8
1970	46	29	75	61.2	38.6
1971	68	36	104	65.4	34.6
1972	83	64	147	56.5	43.5
1973	30	62	92	32.6	67.4
1974	37	35	72	51.4	48.6

Note: Data do not include wives and children. Aliens refer to all nationalities.

Source: Irene R. Cortes, "Mass Naturalization by Legislation and the Chinese in the Philippines," *Fookien Times Philippines Yearbook* (December 1978), p. 300.

Problems

Were the administrative conditions and prerequisites the minimum expectations? Were these fairly acceptable to the minority or onerous to them? Do the answers to the slow pace of applications lie simply in changing the procedures? Or are the answers to be found elsewhere? A comparison of the problems and changes in requirements made since 1975 shall be briefly presented.

(1) The first presidential order gave the deadline for application not later than the end of 1975. Yet the provision that follows it stipulated that the Special Committee on Naturalization would recommend to the President by 15 May 1975, the names of applicants eligible and qualified for naturalization by decree. The ethnic Chinese then were given 34 days to apply. Yet L.O.I. No. 270 was signed on 11 April and disclosed to the public only on 22 April.¹⁷ Eleven days

of the time allotted for application were lost.

The result was confusion, hesitation and disbelief among the ethnic Chinese. The paperwork alone was tremendously time-consuming. There had been signs before that the Philippine government was going to change its foreign policy towards China. But the larger number of the Chinese population was unprepared to foresee and respond to a new policy on the naturalization process and to give evidence to the Chinese government that the country is willing to deal with the residence and citizenship status of the Chinese. That summer President Marcos was visiting Peking.

(2) The Committee established a "complex series of rules which seemed certain to cut down the speed by introducing the red tape that has long made many Filipino Chinese wary of the naturalization obstacle race."¹⁸ The intent of speedy implementation as envisioned by the presidential order was whittled down by the operating procedures

¹⁷Peter Bathurst, "Binding the Minority with Red Tape," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, Vol. 88, No. 20 (May 17, 1975), p. 40.

¹⁸*Ibid.*

designed by the implementors. Practically the same papers required before martial law were also to be submitted by the applicants; for example, alien certificates, birth certificates, proof of income, police and security clearance, tax clearance. What L.O.I. No. 270 cut down was the time period for application: there was no need for the applicant to file his intention first, wait for a year to submit a formal petition for naturalization before the court, publish the petition in the *Official Gazette*, attend a hearing on the petition, receive the Order of Naturalization, and wait for two years before it becomes effective. At the most, it took five years from the time of initiation to the date of actually securing citizenship. Under L.O.I. No. 270, an applicant submits his application for naturalization accompanied by evidences required, appear for an interview before the Committee with his two character witnesses, and wait for the issuance of the presidential decree granting the citizenship. The decree becomes effective with no probationary period as stipulated before.

Indeed, the steps were drastically shortened. Yet, in order to meet the deadline set, the applicant still has to collect all the papers and get two witnesses who are Filipino citizens to vouch for his integrity and character. Much time was needed in queuing up at the National Bureau of Investigation, the National Intelligence and Security Agency, the Commission on Immigration and Deportation (the agency itself concerned with immigrants' records and regulation), City Hall, Bureau of Internal Revenue, and so on. Once all these are secured, the applicant submits his application and waits for the interview schedule. The Committee on

Naturalization in Manila could interview only an average of 200 persons a day. Interviews are conducted only in the afternoon, since half of the day is spent by the Committee processing documents.¹⁹ Those in the provinces had to get application forms at the military zone headquarters in the various regional centers. The Committee sends an official to conduct interviews when there are more than 100 applicants in an area.

It should, however, be recognized that one notable improvement in the process was the bypassing of the Commission on Naturalization and Deportation — the office responsible for enforcing immigration laws.

(3) In the past, an applicant was required to show that he could speak, read, and write English or Spanish and Pilipino or any other principal Philippine dialect. L.O.I. No. 270 amended this to provide only that the applicant "... must be able to speak and write Pilipino; or English or Spanish, and any of the principal Philippine language." The Chinese applicant was expected to demonstrate that he could communicate in Pilipino and in English, Spanish, or another Philippine dialect. There was no doubt that the applicant had also the ability to communicate in his own dialect — either Fukienses, or Cantonese or Mandarin. The Chinese applicant was supposed to be a linguist skillful in many languages. Such stringent language requirement deterred many from applying. Consequently, the Chinese Chamber of Commerce saw President Marcos in

¹⁹United Daily News (Manila, May 18 1975).

1975 and explained the problems of the ethnic Chinese. Among other suggestions, the association suggested that the language requirement be relaxed.²⁰

President Marcos was amenable to the suggestion. When he issued L.O.I. No. 491 the language provision was revised and contained the following:

He must be able to speak and write Filipino or any of the principal Philippine dialects; provided that where the applicant is, in the opinion of the Committee, otherwise clearly qualified for naturalization by decree, the requirement that the applicant should know how to write Filipino or any principal Philippine dialect may be waived or dispensed with.

This provision meant that only the ability to speak and write Pilipino or any major Philippine dialect was sufficient; English or Spanish was altogether omitted. Moreover, in some cases, evidence of the ability to write Pilipino or any dialect could be waived at the discretion of the Committee. This was simply a recognition that most applicants were not educated and did not even have the ability to write in Chinese.

(4) L.O.I. No. 491 reduced the age limit of applicants from 21 years of age to 18 years of age upon the filing of application. This enabled students and the children of ethnic Chinese to qualify. Moreover, the requirement of income or employment under L.O.I. No. 270 was waived for students who are 18 years of age and have the "qualification and potentials of becoming useful Philippine citizens." This provision implied that spouses and children of applicants must

file separately and pay the application fees. Citizenship was not automatically conferred on the members of the family when the head of the household was granted naturalization.

(5) Other problems raised with respect to the various steps in the naturalization process included the following:

- (a) Bringing two witnesses was onerous to some. The Chinese Chamber of Commerce pointed out that the Chinese applicant cannot ask two Filipino citizens to appear before the Committee. It is costly in terms of time for all parties involved. Others known to the Chinese have already been witnesses to other applicants. Such witnesses may no longer appear in behalf of other applicants for fear that they may be accused of profiting as a paid professional witness to applicants. The Chinese Chamber of Commerce proposed that only one witness be required.
- (b) The income requirement was rather high. As established by the Committee, an applicant who is single must show proof that he is earning ₱6,000 a year; and a married applicant with no child, ₱10,000; but for every son or daughter, the income level increases by ₱2,000. The association claimed that although many Chinese have income, the average income-earning Chinese cannot meet the high standards.
- (c) Copies of the application forms were too numerous. L.O.I. No.

²⁰ *United Daily News* (Manila, July 10, 1975).

270 only required three copies but the Committee was asking for five copies. This means that every copy was expected to have one copy of each of the several supporting papers.

- (d) The interview session was also felt to be too long. Given a large number of applicants, the Special Committee cannot possibly schedule all the applicants for interview before the deadline(s). Thus, to date there are 19,500 applications still being processed. However, the government claims that shortening the time for interview might give those questionable applicants less chances to defend themselves or explain their circumstances.
- (e) In view of the limited time, prospective applicants were lured to go to travel agencies or lawyers who demanded exorbitant fees (P5,000 per applicant) in order to get information, advice and help in the application process.
- (f) Chinese who had been living with a Filipina without the benefit of marriage but marries the woman prior to application should be considered as a qualified applicant. Some Chinese did not enter into any formal marriage because the Filipina loses her citizenship upon marriage to a Chinese.²¹ When the spouse was deprived of her citizenship, the Chinese also

lost legitimacy to establish a retail trade or any other occupation prohibited to them. Hence, he resorted to common-law wives — a situation which in turn brings about the stereotype that the Chinese are immoral, infidels, and opportunists. The Chinese applicant suggested that upon marriage, the past should not be taken as a ground for disqualifying them. Placed in a tight spot, the Chinese had no other practical option in order to earn a livelihood.

Two provisions under L.O.I. No. 491 appear to have generated basic tensions on the individual Chinese. First, he must be of good moral character and must have conducted himself in a proper and irreproachable manner during the entire period of his residence in the Philippines. Secondly, he must have a known trade, business, profession, assets, or lawful occupation from which he derives income sufficient for his support. The Chinese applicants asked for understanding and compassion on their predicament and less of the legalism which most administrators adhere to.

The long list of problems above suggested that L.O.I. No. 270 was probably issued for expediency and convenience rather than for humanitarian reasons. It apparently was not drafted with care and deliberate concern for the underlying contradictions and near impossibility of its execution. The impelling motive was for an action to be made before President Marcos took the trip to Peking. Possibly, the drafters were simply aware of the legal requirements and not of the social, spatial and temporal dimensions of the issues. L.O.I. No. 270

²¹ Coppel, "The Position of the Chinese . . ." pp. 22-23.

was hastily written that three subsequent orders were issued amending it. The drafters had also no accurate information as to the total Chinese population in the Philippines. The census was not reliable enough. In April 1975, a decree was issued requiring the registration of "all aliens living in the country for more than six months." The Chinese felt that it was directed mainly at them — not the Americans, British, or Spaniards. In one account, this prompted concern among many Chinese who did not anticipate L.O.I. No. 270 which was signed in the same month.²²

The Chinese Government knew in advance of the move of the Philippine government. Vice Premier Deng Ziaoping announced in a speech before the United Nations in 1975 that the Philippines ". . . will soon open wide the door for mass naturalization."²³ He also reiterated the People's Republic of China's policy of approving the assimilation of overseas Chinese into their countries of residence. President Marcos did not capitalize on this statement of the Chinese leader in encouraging the ethnic Chinese to adopt Philippine citizenship.²⁴

The idea of "mass naturalization" mentioned above did not appeal to the Filipino public. A survey conducted in March 1975 revealed the

²²Nena Vreeland, *et. al.*, *Area Handbook for the Philippines* (Washington, D.C.: Foreign Area Studies of the American University, 1976), p. 94.

²³Bathurst, "Binding the Minority with Red Tape," p. 40

²⁴Harvey Stockwin, "Marcos' New Friends," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, Vol. 88, No. 25 (June 20, 1975), p. 15.

reluctance of the public to giving citizenship to the ethnic Chinese *en masse*. Over half the number of respondents (58.5 percent) disagreed with this idea.²⁵ Application by those who qualify and meet certain conditions was more acceptable. Mass naturalization was hardly pushed by martial law officials and the press. Vice Chairman Deng was either misinformed or misquoted. No mass naturalization was promulgated. The idea was also impractical, involuntary on the part of the ethnic Chinese, and contradictory to the principle that citizenship is a privilege and a right.

From another perspective, the acquisition of naturalization was not commonly held as the perceived goal of the ethnic Chinese. The 1975 survey asked 580 ethnic Chinese their preferences if the acquisition of Philippine citizenship is made easier for them. There was a sizeable but not overwhelming response (46.9 percent) in favor of electing Philippine citizenship. About 16.6 percent answered "no." But there was also a large group comprising the "don't know" or "no" response category: 36.5 percent. This finding indicated a large proportion of the ethnic Chinese in doubt, torn between their pride and loyalty to China, and in suffering discrimination, alienation and frustration, a contempt for the Philippines. There remained some uncertainty and ambivalence among them.

²⁵Jenny Dee Pacho, *et. al.*, "Report on Survey of Opinions of Filipinos and Ethnic Chinese on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations with the People's Republic of China," College of Public Administration, University of the Philippines, and the National Defense College of the Philippines, 1975.

Naturalization is not an important means to realizing their goals as ethnic Chinese. To them, what is primordial is to remain a good Philippine resident and a good Chinese.²⁶ To them, naturalization which implies integration is not a goal; however, they do "yearn to live where they can have a feeling of belonging."²⁷ As an alternative, they seek co-existence thereby recognizing and preserving their cultural life and institutions. The Philippine government, on the other hand, seeks to achieve their "integration into the national fabric." The government is against pluralism or hegemony among groups and wants to secure a homogeneous, integrated community. The negation of pluralism applies clearly to the politically passive ethnic Chinese and not to the rebellious Muslims in the Philippine South.

The Philippine government expected the ethnic Chinese to become Filipinos overnight, which Amyot had observed to be too much to hope for.²⁸ There will remain for some time a dualism among the ethnic Chinese, and a cultural blend to add to the Philippine society.

The impatience and distrust of the Philippine government is reflected in a recent statement by the Philippine Justice Minister. The ethnic Chinese who have become naturalized Filipinos continue to keep their cultural identity and relative isolation from the rest of the Philippine society. The

Minister claimed that the ethnic Chinese "... have remained Chinese in ideology, attitude, and practice and have stubbornly refused to join the mainstream of Filipino life."²⁹ He warned them that the government may be provoked to take steps similar to the Malaysian approach of giving social and economic preferences to the indigenous citizens (the *bumiputra*) and protection from the economic controls of the Chinese and Indian minorities in Malaysia.

The Philippine government created its own dilemma by its "either you are with us or not" stance. The ethnic Chinese must apply for naturalization or become a person in limbo. There was another threat made in forcing the issue: "Be one of us or become a citizen of the People's Republic of China." The decision gets harder to make since the ethnic Chinese want to associate with China as a cultural identity but not necessarily as a political identity, i.e., as communists. The lesson to be gained is that the Philippine government was flexible in the procedure but not insofar as the primary goal of national integration.

An alternative policy approach would be to accept the present cultural preference of the ethnic Chinese, allow them more choices and time in making a decision on citizenship, and provide intermediate steps towards the acquisition of Philippine citizenship. The intermediate solution requires a decision on a gradual basis and by stages. It also allows for one to defer the decision -- even for a life-

²⁶ Amyot, *The Chinese and National Integration in Southeast Asia*, p. 40.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Rey G. Panaligan, "Air Government Warning Against Some Naturalized Citizens," *Bulletin Today* (Manila, November 19, 1978).

time — but legitimizes the residency status of the ethnic Chinese rather than their citizenship. The thrust of the law in the Philippines is citizenship while the goal of the ethnic Chinese may simply be residency.

President Marcos did not avert what Peck had observed as an incipient race problem in the Philippines.³⁰ However, the changes in legal terms open up a Pandora's box of potential racial conflicts. The presidential orders are but a prelude to more unresolved difficulties in social, political, economic, and behavioral terms. The power of martial law was ineffective in commanding the ethnic Chinese to apply for naturalization despite the concessions to demands for changes in the requirements and administrative procedures. The answer to the issue runs deeper than the law. I cite the following statements made by two authors way before 1975:

Apathy with respect to naturalization is increased by the fact that a Chinese continues to be discriminated against even after becoming a Philippine citizen. Naturalized Chinese often find themselves in the position of second-class citizens.³¹

Let us remember that if we want them to be loyal to us, we must allow them to live as we do, to have the rights we also have. Loyalty on their part and discrimination on ours are not compatible.³²

Both Amyot and Felix seemed to believe that since the Chinese does not

acquire an equal status by obtaining citizenship, he has nothing to gain thereby. He can nevertheless obtain citizenship for convenience and for survival purposes. The use of law will not effectuate any integrative change among minorities if the conditions for it are not established.³³

Policy Implications

A statement which appeared in a Chinese daily newspaper admonishes the Chinese community to be certain about their decision on citizenship declaring that:

Regardless of what your decision is, we only hope that it is based on your personal choice or reason and that your decision is irreversible. For those who have decided to apply (for citizenship), you have already decided to become 100 percent Filipino. Those who have decided to remain Chinese citizens or become stateless must put yourselves on the shoes of those who already filed for citizenship. Think also of those who did apply. You may think you love your country (China) and you made a foolish decision. Thus, you prompt the government to be suspicious and damage the Chinese as a whole.³⁴

The decision of one affects the future stakes and integrity of the entire community. The interest of the community are enhanced if the individual applicant is careful, considerate, and well-intentioned in making a choice. The choice of a particular status or citizenship has responsibilities and expectations which an individual must fulfill. In turn, there are privileges and bene-

³⁰ Peck, "Nationalistic Influences on the Philippine Law of Citizenship," p. 478.

³¹ Amyot, *The Chinese and National Integration*, p. 35.

³² Felix, Jr., (ed.), *The Chinese in the Philippines, 1570-1770*, p. 10.

³³ Amyot, *The Chinese and National Integration*, p. 106.

³⁴ *United Daily News* (Manila, July 28, 1975).

fits attendant to the acquisition of Philippine citizenship.

However, the ethnic Chinese are not a solid bloc speaking as one and pursuing the same means to achieve their survival purpose. Strategies would differ because the ethnic Chinese have different ideological perspectives, linguistic backgrounds, religious preferences, occupational interests, economic status, images of the Philippines, and perception of and experience in racial relations, i.e., degrees of discrimination or bias.

There are three tendencies to be explored as to what naturalization can confer or offer. These are: first, naturalization can never be viewed in common as a strategy towards effectuating the goals of the ethnic Chinese. To them it may be in conflict with their own individual goals or the pursuits of the group as a whole. Secondly, to others who speak as individuals, naturalization is a convenient measure to resolve their status of residence and to guarantee their economic investments and holdings in the Philippines. To acquire citizenship means the right to own property — i.e., land which before had been denied to them or possible only through Filipino “dummies.” Finally, there is the potential view that naturalization means equal access to the resources in society and the benefits that accrue to being a citizen. Examples are entrance to free public schools, state scholarships to college-bound children of low income Chinese families, getting employment in the government, or practicing a profession such as engineering, accountancy, medical technology. Similar benefits and services open to other minorities (for example, Muslims, Igorots, Ifugaos) may be made available also to the deserving and needy

ethnic Chinese. There would then be equal access to benefits, and, as Amyot calls it, “full access to opportunity of achievement,”³⁵ such as jobs, public services, and government loans, as well as equal access in terms of political opportunities, e.g., holding an elective or appointive position. Citizenship should confer such a share of the benefits and expect the performance of the responsibilities involved. There is therefore a concomitant responsibility involved, such as participation or involvement in the policy sphere, willingness to participate in community decisions and projects, providing a support base for specific policies, or joining the military.

President Marcos had no illusions that his policy of assimilation would not entail any responsibilities and admonitions. He laid down the ground rules and the expectations as well, of this policy. Marcos accepts the view that the legal steps of assimilation, for example, naturalization, is only a procedural and facilitative process towards a primary objective. The act of applying for citizenship, he argued, “does not automatically accomplish assimilation and integration.

According to the President, “there remains the long, difficult and complex task of converting a legal commitment into a political, economic, social, cultural, and personal commitment.”³⁶ The policy of assimilation as defined in several pronouncements of the President was not entire-

³⁵ Amyot, *The Chinese and National Integration*, p. 106.

³⁶ Ferdinand E. Marcos, Speech delivered before a meeting of the Federation of Filipino-Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Inc. (Manila: March 29, 1979), p. 7.

ly unambiguous. Several phrases were apparent: "the Chinese community has contributed much to the vitality of our culture and our national life,"³⁷ "This society is . . . receptive to external influences".³⁸ "The Philippines is a country that has become a melting pot for all of Asia."³⁹ Admission of the influence and contributions of Chinese culture is not rhetoric on the part of presidential proclamations because scholarly accounts testify to this fact.⁴⁰ It would seem that the Marcos policy is to allow and recognize the positive contributions of the minority and leave room for cultural pluralism within an assimilation policy, although in legal terms, pluralism is rejected as evident in the goals stipulated in L.O.I. No. 270.

As a result of the changes under President Marcos, the ethnic Chinese have now ventured into land acquisition and development, large-scale farming, livestock industry, and other economic activities which were largely reserved for Filipino citizens. The ethnic Chinese were now also extending to other occupations or employment. Sensing that commerce is be-

coming "crowded and risky," there are ethnic Chinese who prepare and train themselves to become professionals — executives in corporations, or administrators and technocrats in the government.⁴¹ Another implication is the increase of ethnic Chinese who may now qualify to practice certain professions (e.g., architecture, engineering, or law) which were limited before only to Filipino citizens.

What will be the impact on the spatial distribution of ethnic Chinese? The residential pattern presently indicates some shifts but the concentration of the Chinese in central areas of cities or market towns remains visible. Only a limited few are directly engaged in farming because of restrictions on land ownership. Residences and commercial enterprises are clustered in defined areas in the market towns. Under the new change, the prospect is that the Chinese may begin to acquire openly farm or pasture lands in rural areas. Such a trend may spread out the Chinese and reduce to a degree the image that the Chinese as a group are exclusive and interact only with themselves. For instance, they may return to large scale vegetable farming which they had earlier pioneered before the policy barring them from such activity. Despite the change in legal status, however, the ethnic Chinese would still remain the object of hostility and guarded skepticism when the Chinese begin to lay

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Ferdinand E. Marcos, *Presidential Speeches* (Manila: 1978), Vol. II, p. 350.

³⁹ Marcos, *Presidential Speeches* (Manila: 1978), Vol. I, p. 100.

⁴⁰ See for example, Eufronio M. Alip, *The Chinese in Manila* (Manila: National Historical Commission, 1974); Gideon Hsu, "Some Aspects of Racial and Cultural Links Between the Chinese and the Filipinos," *The Annals of Philippine Chinese Historical Association*, Fifth issue (June 1975); and Shubert S.C. Liao, "How the Chinese Lived in the Philippines from 1570 to 1898," *Fil-Sino Journal*, Vol. V, No. 12 (April 1958).

⁴¹ John T. Omohundro, "Trading Patterns of Philippine Chinese: Strategies of Sojourning Middlemen," in Karl L. Hutterer (ed.), *Economic Exchange and Social Interaction in Southeast Asia: Perspectives from Prehistory, History and Ethnography* (Ann Arbor: Center for South and Southeast Asian Studies, University of Michigan, 1977), p. 158.

specific claims to space, e.g., the acquisition of landed estates, forest and mining concessions, and housing. Such a possibility may arise in the event of an economic crisis when people struggle for the limited resources available. This situation existed in Indonesia in the late 1960s. On a smaller scale, there is already an impending crisis in the competition for the limited urban space in Metro Manila where Filipinos perceive a visible disparity in terms of the ethnic Chinese beginning to acquire urban properties. To Filipinos, this is resource deprivation on their part by a minority which has the economic capacity to displace or dispossess them of their land.

Viraphol has concisely observed that: "For the remainder of the Chinese minority the attachment to China has been more of a sentiment, an ethical or cultural affinity than a strong political interest.⁴² As temporary sojourners in Southeast Asia they have kept a hope to return to their homeland, even a wish that after their death their bodies be buried in China.⁴³ In the Philippines, such an observation may also possibly hold true. But the attachment to their adopted home is becoming strong and rooted, particularly as the older generation of Chinese fades and the cultural link to China weakens.

On the other hand, it is also possible that with the opening of diplomatic relations with China, the ethnic Chinese in the Philippines may once more have a personal experience in touching base with China and anchoring their cultural affinity and identification with that country. The likelihood of this may also increase as China's stature in the world community rises both as an economic and ideological force. It is then a failure of Philippine policy to expect the ethnic Chinese to withdraw and remain isolated from the larger community.

This article ends with two fables from the Chinese classics. Mencius recounts the story of Po I who fled Chou and settled elsewhere. When he heard that Hsi Po, a new ruler in Chou, began to take good care of the aged, Po I asked, "Why not go back?" There was food for all, land was parceled out equally, and men were taught how to plant and to keep animals. Nobody was cold and hungry. In contrast, Mencius tells us the story of Shun, who after seeing only hunger, injustice, and cold in his land, fled, "casting aside the Empire as no more than discarding a worn shoe."⁴⁴ To flee without returning is an individual choice but is deeply dependent on the existing political, social, and economic conditions.

⁴²Sarasin Viraphol, *The Nanyang Chinese*, p. 23.

⁴³*Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁴⁴Sebastian de Grazia (ed.), *Masters of Chinese Political Thought* (New York: The Viking Press, 1973). pp. 146-147.