

Baying after Marcos

The liberal American and Canadian media appear determined to have the head of Philippine leader Ferdinand Marcos on a platter. Hardly a day passes without new media charges against Marcos and wife Imelda of corruption, fraud, wickedness and chicanery.

The biggest bombshell was last week's full-page expose by the august *New York Times* in which it was alleged that Marcos' heroic war record was a hoax. To no one's surprise, the *Times* story became a key issue in tomorrow's elections. It was just a little ironical to see the *Times*, which devotes many words to telling Ronald Reagan not to interfere in other nations' affairs, busy electioneering for Marcos' opponent, Mrs. Corazon Aquino, a former housewife.

Why, I wonder, does our liberal media keep expecting Marcos and company to maintain North American ethical and political standards?

The Philippines is a very rough place, a sort of Asian Wild West. Corruption, violence, crime and larceny are normal features of everyday Filipino life. Just talking about poll-watching or vote tabulations seems somewhat surreal in this pistol-packing nation of 52 million.

Think of the Philippines as a south Asian version of Mexico and you will get a better flavor of the place than our liberal media has conveyed. Marcos and his cronies are certainly corrupt, venal and often nasty. But so are his many opponents and the real powers behind the smiling Mrs. Aquino. You don't get to be president of the Philippines by being *Senor Nice*.

To me, it is rather impressive that the Philippines is having even a semi-honest election at all. Here is a nation rent by growing communist revolution, regional insurrections, a declining economy and many other problems. Yet for all its many failings it still has a reasonably free press, elections and free speech.

Contrast, for a moment, Mexico. Our neighbor has a tame press, corruption far worse than the Philippines and a political system where the ruling party — in power for over 50 years — wins 98% of the votes in every election.

Why are all those TV cameras and news teams eagerly ferreting out Marcos' sins 5,000 miles away in Southeast Asia when far bigger wickedness goes on just south of the Rio Grande?

The obvious answer is that Marcos has the image of being a right-winger and pro-American, qualities that are anathema to the North American liberal press. Mexico's ruling party, a far craftier bunch, is also right-wing and pro-American — but quietly. For public consumption, the Mexicans sound leftish and anti-American. They thus avoid liberal TV glare and keep up the image of struggling revolutionaries.

Who, for example, has seen recent stories of private New York bank accounts of the wife of Mexico's president? Or the murder of opposition candidates in recent elections in northern Mexico?

Or, for that matter, what about all of those Asian nations where there are no elections at all, like Vietnam, China, Burma, Laos, Cambodia or North Korea?

ERIC
MARGOLIS



The answer is simple. While the liberal media seeks to destroy the imperfect democracy of the Philippines in favor of some ideal system that cannot be achieved in such a rough place, it simply ignores the other tyrannies of region.

When did we last read of corruption or political dissent in North Korea? There is none, because the press is not allowed in. Marcos must have been sorely tempted to kick out all foreign newsmen — as Burma, Laos and North Korea do — and run his country in peace.

Could Mrs. Aquino run for office in China or in Vietnam? When did the *New York Times* last interview opposition leaders in China or Laos? Corrupt and nasty as the Philippines may be, Marcos is still allowing an open election tomorrow — more than Mikhail Gorbachev dares do in the Soviet Union.

Let's keep this perspective in mind while watching events in the Philippines. The media, in full bay for Marcos' blood, will not. If he wins tomorrow the liberals will cry "fraud" and continue to undermine his regime, helping pave the way for a genuine communist revolution that will turn the Philippines into another socialist tyranny like Vietnam or North Korea. When that happens, only friendly, tame newsmen will be allowed in — to observe, not to criticize.

If Marcos loses and is driven from office (don't discount a military coup) then the liberal media will aim at its next targets: Chile and Pakistan.

