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MANILA SQUATTERS ARE AN EYESORE FOR MRS. MARCOS

By Pamela G. Hollie, Special To the New York Times

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Manila Squatters Are an Eyesore for Mrs. Marcos

By Pamela G. Hollie

MANILA, June 29 (AP) — Mrs. Imelda Marcos, the first lady of the Philippines, is so disgusted by the sight of the thousands of squatters who have taken over the city's slums that she has ordered them to be removed.

The squatters, who have been living in the city's slums for decades, are now being ordered to leave by the government. The government says that the squatters are a disgrace to the city and that they are a threat to the safety of the city.

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Vincente Centeno sat with his head in his hands. "He did not go to work today," said Antonio Centeno, Mr. Centeno's 12-year-old son. "My father is afraid they will come and arrest us. My father would come home. No family."

The Centeno home, a tiny metal and board shanty erected two years ago on land across from the two-month-old ultramodern Manila International Airport, is one of thousands of shantytown homes that were ordered demolished last week by Imelda R. Marcos, the First Lady and Human Settlements Minister. Acting quickly, the airport authority has signed an agreement to begin the demolition and relocation of the residents whose shacks give arriving visitors to the Philippines their first look at Manila's growing urban poor.

To make Manila the city that the First Lady invisions, these squatters at the airport as well as illegal squatters on all

development sites in Manila must be moved. With the endorsement of the Roman Catholic Church and Jaime Cardinal Sin plus the power of a presidential decree, the First Lady's "city of man" should be largely cleared of "illegal squatters" by the end of July when the First Lady has asked Manila deputy mayors to report their progress. Illegal squatters are those people without building permits or people who occupy public or private land in expectation of payment when forced out. Deputy Mayor James C. Barbers, who heads the city's antisquatting committee, has ordered the arrest of all people squatting on public and private lands. Nagging Problem for Marcos

Squatters have become a nagging social and political problem for the Marcos Government. According to the National Housing Authority, the number of squatters in metro Manila, which includes several satellite cities, has risen 38 percent to over 1.6 million in one year. In the last four years, the number has risen about twofold, creating health, welfare and crime problems. In the city of Manila, with a population of more than two million, squatters make up nearly one third of the population.

Nearly every vacant lot in Manila is covered with makeshift houses. Without electricity or running water, the families dig open wells, which when no longer used for water are filled with trash. Some of the squatters take over abandoned buildings and warehouses where dozens of families live side by side in cramped, unsanitary conditions.

One such warehouse is called the Hellenberg after a local comic strip's fantasy spaceship that holds thousands of people for space travel. More than 185 squatter families have lived in the warehouse for nearly five years in lean-tos of cardboard. The area around the warehouse has been christened Bubble City, from another comic strip about an all-computerized underwater city enclosed in glass. At least 10 children have died of dysentery, pneumonia and measles in the last four years. And, though some people have moved away, others have come to swell the community in the warehouse formerly occupied by the General Paper Corporation. Pope Alarmed by Poverty

When Pope John Paul II visited the Philippines last year, he expressed alarm at the large numbers of poor. The Pope's dismay added impact to a World Bank report issued before his visit in February 1981, which showed that poverty in the Philippines was worsening and that between 1975 and 1980 the number of poor had increased from 24 percent to 40 percent of the urban population. The Pope noted that the rehabilitation of the country's largest slum in Tondo would never catch up with the housing needs of the poor.

The Marcos Government has attempted to improve its image with several urban renewal and community-based self-help programs. But with the weak economy and high unemployment, the poor have made no visible financial gains. Politically, however, certain groups, assisted by Catholic Church workers, have shown their willingness to challenge in court or on the

street Government directives. It is among this underclass that anti-Government dissidents have found sympathy and limited support.

"We have rights," said Armando Legarda, who sees the Government's @antisquatter policy as a means to break up politically active communities. "If they relocate us, they think it will crush our spirit." Violence Is Reported

Some recent evictions have been violent. Three people were hurt in a bottle-throwing, club-swinging clash between the police, demolition crews and squatters who were being removed from a squatters camp in Pasay City in May. Some of the 208 squatter families claimed to have been residents of the area since 1908 and swore that they would not leave. A court ruled against their protests and the shanties are being torn down.

Recently, residents of Freedom Village in Libus, just outside Manila, set up barricades and threatened to fight Government men carrying out orders to demolish their homes on land near the Capitol Golf Course and Country Club. To guard their compound, squads of men built a five-foot-deep trap filled with sharpened bamboo sticks and barbed wire. Negotiations postponed the demolition.

It has been the practice in the Philippines to give title to longtime squatters who cultivate the land and make an area their home. The turnover of public land to squatters in the past has encouraged many to remain on land they do not own in

hope of eventually acquiring title. On June 24, about 100 families in Sampaloc, a large squatter community, received titles to their lots after living in the area for 30 years as squatters.

The war against Manila's squatters is especially directed at the illegal squatters, though it is generally feared that any squatter can fall into this category. Illegal squatting is punishable by imprisonment of six months to one year and a fine of up to 5,000 pesos, about \$600. 40% Earn Under \$140 a Year

Five thousand pesos is a fortune in Manila, where as much as 40 percent of the urban population live on less than 1,200 pesos a year, about \$140. "Many earn much less," said Felipe San Diego. He earns \$60 a year doing odd jobs and lives with 14 relatives who were squatters under the Quirino Avenue Bridge in Manila.

This week, he helped them tear down their wooden house, which stood just a few feet above the polluted river. Carrying the boards and pieces of tin on their heads, they moved to a vacant lot a few blocks away where they built a lean-to. They have no idea who owns the land or how long they will be able to stay before they are forced to move again. No one told the family about relocation or payment or Government help. Like so many of their neighbors, they simply moved to another place where they are less visible.

"Two men came and said 'you go,' " Mr. San Diego said. "We

did not ask questions."