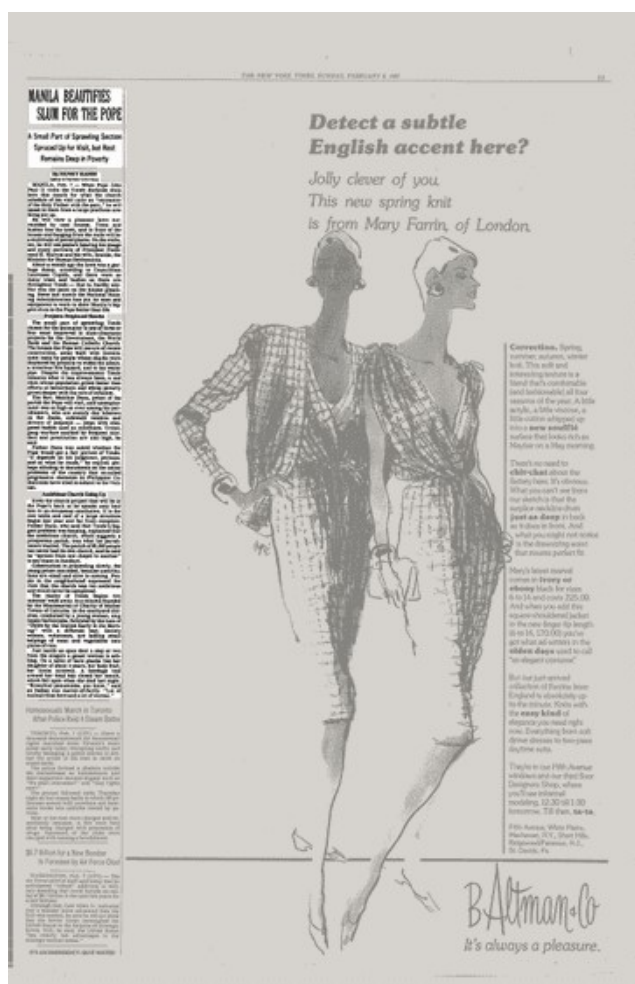


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MANILA BEAUTIFIES SLUM FOR THE POPE

By Henry Kamm, Special To the New York Times

Feb. 8, 1981



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When Pope John Paul II visits the Tondo dockside slum here this month for what the church schedule of his visit calls an "encounter of the Holy Father with the poor," he will speak to them from a large platform now being put up.

He will view a pleasant lawn surrounded by neat houses. Trees and bushes line the lawn, and in front of the houses and hanging from the walls will be a multitude of potted plants. On the walls, too, he will see posters bearing his image and many portraits of President Ferdinand E. Marcos and his wife, Imelda, the Minister for Human Settlements.

About a month ago the lawn was a garbage dump, according to Councilman Laureano Cupido, and there were as many trees and bushes as there are throughout Tondo - that is, hardly any. Nor was the paint on the houses gleaming. Since last month the National Housing Administration has put its men and equipment to work to show Manila's biggest slum to the Pope better than life. Projects Displaced Shacks

The small part of sprawling Tondo chosen for the encounter is one of three or four most improved in slum-clearance projects by the Government, the World Bank and the Roman Catholic Church. The houses the Pope will see are of recent construction, some built with Government loans by people whose shacks were displaced by projects to widen the alleys, a notorious fire hazard, and to lay water pipe. Despite the improvements Tondo remains what it has always been, a sad slum whose population grows faster than efforts at betterment and whose poverty grows deeper with the rate of inflation.

The Rev. Melchor Dano, priest of the parish the Pope will visit, said unemployment was as high as ever among his parishioners, who are mainly day laborers on the docks, sidewalk vendors and drivers of

jeepneys - jeeps with elongated bodies used as minibuses. Crime, gang warfare marked by frequent murders and prostitution are also high, he said.

Father Dano was asked whether the Pope would get a fair picture of Tondo. "It depends on his judgment, perhaps, and on what he reads," he replied, perhaps alluding to documents on the social problems of the country that so-called progressive elements in Philippine Catholicism have tried to submit to the Vatican. Ambitious Church Going Up

Even the church project that will be at the Pope's back as he speaks may lead him to an erroneous conclusion. It is the raw walls and roof of a large structure begun last year and far from complete. Father Dano, who said that Tondo's biggest problem was housing, explained that the ambitious church, which suggests a prosperous parish, was what his parishioners wanted. The parish of 60,000 people has never had its own church, and he said he "sprints from one chapel to another" to say mass on Sundays.

Construction is proceeding slowly, the young priest conceded, because contributions are small and slow in coming. People in the neighborhood expressed the view that the church was too ambitious and would never be completed.

The reality of Tondo begins two minutes' walk away, in a mission founded by the Missionaries of Charity of Mother Teresa of Calcutta. In the courtyard children, conducted by a young woman, sing happy hallelujahs, followed by the tune of "Down by the Station Early in the Morning" with a different text. Society women, volunteers, are ladling small helpings of meat and vegetables onto plates of rice.

Just inside an open door a step or two from the singers a gaunt woman is sobbing. On a table of bare planks lies her daughter of about 4 years, her body frail, her limbs scrawny. A bandage tied around her head has closed her mouth, which fell open when she died last night. "Bronchial pneumonia, you know," said an Indian nun matter-of-factly. "Lot of

malnutrition here and a lot of worms."

A version of this article appears in print on , Section 1, Page 11 of the National edition with the headline: MANILA BEAUTIFIES SLUM FOR THE POPE