

LETTER TO UC CHANCELLOR

Ira Heyman
Chancellor
University of California
Berkeley, CA 94720

Dear Mr. Heyman:

It has recently come to our attention that the University of California at Berkeley will be hosting a month-long Philippine Mayors' Management Seminar from August 1-28, 1981 under the auspices of the Institute of Urban and Regional Development.

We understand the seminar is financed by the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Marcos government. It constitutes the final phase of a program intended to upgrade the management skills of city governments in the Philippines.

The Marcos government has been widely denounced as an autocratic government which has consistently violated the political and economic rights of the Filipino people. Respected international organizations such as Amnesty International and International Commission of Jurists have repeatedly exposed violations of human rights ranging from arbitrary arrest and detention to "salvaging" or the murder of political opponents of the regime.

The University's sponsorship of a seminar for the regime's city mayors will undoubtedly contribute to the legitimacy of the Marcos regime. In the last few months, the regime has tried unsuccessfully to dispel its image as a dictatorship by lifting martial law and holding elections. Despite the widespread denunciation of these political exercises, the Reagan administration recently praised the regime for its "adherence to democratic principles and processes." Under these circumstances, this seminar will be interpreted as laying the political groundwork for Marcos' state visit in October.

By holding this seminar, the University of California will become an instrument of the Reagan administration's policy of uncritical support for "friendly" dictatorships. In this process, the university's reputation as a center of independent and critical thinking on political issues will surely be diminished.

Apart from its political implications, the academic underpinnings of the seminar are also questionable. While the seminar lecturers may be competent in their respective academic fields, the seminar organizers have not provided them with the necessary orientation to the Philippine political context. At the meeting organized ostensibly for this purpose, the lecturer did not once mention that the Philippines was under martial law from 1972 to January this year and that the Marcos regime retains dictatorial powers to this day. When asked to characterize Philippine local governments, the lecturer said they are "just like U.S. local governments."

As members of the University community--faculty, students and employees--we urge you to consider the merits of the seminar. We call on you to cancel it, before any further damage is caused by this politically suspect and academically shabby enterprise.