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HOW THE MARCOS OPPOSITION CHALLENGES THE UNITED STATES

INTRODUCTION

The simmering political and economic crisis in the Republic of the Philippines has created a complex problem for U.S. policy makers. Never before has the Philippine Republic figured so prominently in U.S. security calculations--and never before have U.S. security relations with Manila faced so uncertain a future. This is the situation in which Washington must chart a course that will protect U.S. interests in the Philippines without doing a disservice to the general interests of the government of the Philippines or its people.

Since the August 1983 assassination of former Senator Benigno ("Ninoy") Aquino, Jr., on the tarmac of Manila International Airport, the government of President Ferdinand Marcos has suffered severe impairments, and political circumstances in the Philippines have become increasingly volatile. There have been massive defections from the Marcos regime in the urban areas, with both surveys and elections providing evidence of the regime's loss of credibility.

Under these circumstances, the credibility of a variety of anti-Marcos opposition groups has increased markedly. What had been a dispirited and disorganized political opposition has become more effective--attracting broad-based support and significant financial assistance. This revitalized opposition now includes groups ranging from the radical communist left, through left-leaning student and Church groups as well as old-line politicians and Church-affiliated reformist elements, to those who advocate a simple restoration of constitutional government. There also are more moderate reformers within Marcos's party and the armed forces.

Within this complex political environment U.S. officials must choose a suitable course, directly or indirectly supporting one or another, or some collection of political forces, which will foster results that will serve both U.S. and general Philippine interests.

As though all this were not difficult enough, the Philippine domestic crisis is unfolding in an international context that involves the security interests of the world's major military powers. As the Philippines was sliding into political and economic crisis, the Soviet military gained access to base facilities in Vietnam. By the time of the assassination of Benigno Aquino, Soviet naval and air units had become a relatively permanent fixture in Southeast Asia.

THE CURRENT CRISIS

The Soviet Factor

The projection of Soviet air and naval forces into East and Southeast Asia now constitutes a considerable military threat not only to U.S. security interests but to all the nations of the region. This new factor gives the developments in the Philippines a major geopolitical dimension. Soviet naval combatants now routinely use base facilities in Vietnam. Some of the most advanced Soviet combat aircraft have been observed on Vietnamese airfields, and in recent months Soviet reconnaissance aircraft have regularly violated the Philippine air defense zone. Soviet naval and air units have engaged in joint operations with the Vietnamese military in complex amphibious maneuvers in the region.¹

The Soviet fleet's blue water capabilities now extend from the coast of Africa to Vladivostok and threaten the major sea lanes of communication of the Western Pacific. Since early 1983, Moscow has been operating from 25 to 30 warships and auxiliaries in the South China Sea. This means that, for the first time in history, the Soviet Union projects a formidable military presence in Southeast Asia. The most important Western counterweight to this are the U.S. air and naval bases in the Philippines.²

Economic Aspects

In contrast to their security relations, U.S.-Philippine economic relations are of relatively minor importance to the U.S. American investments in the Philippines make up no more than 0.5

¹ See "Soviet Flyovers Reported," Washington Times, December 21, 1984, p. 7A; "The Russians are Landing," The Economist, April 28, 1984, p. 47.

² See A. James Gregor, "The Key Role of U.S. Bases in the Philippines," Heritage Foundation Asian Studies Center Background No. 7, January 10, 1984.

percent of total U.S. foreign investment and less than 2 percent of all U.S. investment in developing countries.³ In 1981, even before the economic crisis that followed the Aquino assassination, trade between the U.S. and the Philippines only amounted to about \$3.5 billion, about 0.8 percent of total U.S. global trade and just under 7 percent of total U.S. trade with Asian developing countries. For the Philippines, however, the U.S. economic connection is of critical consequence. About 25 percent of all external Philippine economic activity is with the U.S., which provides a market for about 30 percent of all Philippine exports and is the source of about 23 percent of all Philippine imports.⁴ In effect, the U.S. is as important to the economic viability of the Philippines as is the Philippines to the security interests of the U.S. in Southeast Asia.

A Long Political History

Beyond this, unlike most "decolonized" nations in Asia and Africa, the long colonial relationship between the U.S. and the Philippines forged bonds of affection and cultural affinity that have survived to this day. In spite of Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos's identification of his nation as an "Asian" and "Third World" country, it remains a Western-oriented, pro-American political community.⁵

The political turmoil following the 1983 Aquino assassination has been fueled by the mounting economic difficulties in the Philippines. These difficulties are expected to persist at least until the Philippine economy begins to grow--something not anticipated before 1986 at the earliest.

The political integrity of the Marcos government has been seriously undermined by the investigation of the Agrava Commission into the murder of Aquino. The Commission concluded that a "military conspiracy" was involved. This, coupled with evidence of a protracted illness afflicting Marcos himself, suggests a high-risk political environment in the Philippines that will persist for the indeterminate future. In this environment, Philippines government functionaries appear to be alienated, demoralized, and largely immobilized.

All these factors--predicated on security, economic, and political interests--make up the "special relationship" that has

³ Edberto Villegas, Studies in Philippine Political Economy (Manila: Silangan, 1983), p. 4.

⁴ Philippine-American Relations (Manila: National Media Production Center, August 1982), pp. 6-7. See A. James Gregor, Crisis in the Philippines: A Threat to U.S. Interests (Washington, D.C.: Ethics and Public Policy, 1984), pp. 24-25.

⁵ See Ferdinand E. Marcos, The New Philippine Republic: A Third World Approach to Democracy (Manila: Ferdinand E. Marcos, 1982), chap. 7.

characterized U.S.-Philippine interchange for eight decades.⁶ All are threatened by the current crisis that has settled down on the Philippines. It is within these circumstances that U.S. policy makers must find the most appropriate courses of action.

THE ALTERNATIVES

A number of major considerations influence current American judgments concerning Philippine alternatives. One is the apparent indisposition of U.S. analysts to take Filipino declarative policy seriously.

Reminiscent of the analysis of many "China-watchers" in the late 1940s is the inclination of some American policy makers and academics to interpret Filipino political pronouncements rather than to listen to them. Thus, the anti-Marcos opposition is understood to seek no more than a restoration of pluralist democracy. In fact, many of the leaders of the anti-Marcos political opposition choose to interpret the present crisis in the Philippines, not in "bourgeois democratic" terms, but in quasi-Marxist categories.

Americans often have made costly mistakes in assessing the character of political and revolutionary movements: in China in the late 1940s, in Cuba in the late 1950s, in Cambodia in the early 1970s, and a few years later in Nicaragua. Revolutionary pronouncements, fundamentally anti-U.S. in inspiration, typically have been dismissed by American analysts as expressions of pique, as an "understandable" reaction to "mistaken" U.S. policy that has "supported" an incumbent, and offending, regime. The suggestion has always been that, after a revolution displaces the offending system, "moderate" oppositions, irrespective of their revolutionary and anti-American rhetoric, would lapse back into broadly democratic, pro-U.S. postures. Once again these arguments are being heard in the U.S., this time in terms of the anti-Marcos political opposition in the Philippines.

The analysis currently offered divides the viable political forces in the Philippines into two broad categories: those identified with the Marcos incumbency and those loosely grouped as the "anti-Marcos opposition." Most attention seems to be focused on the latter. In terms of U.S. interests, however, it is evident that those identified with the Marcos administration, rather than with the opposition, afford the assurance of a continuation of the policies that have proved compatible with overall U.S. interests. Those associated with the anti-Marcos political opposition, on the other hand, constitute a threat to those interests.

⁶ See the discussion in A. James Gregor, ed., The U.S. and the Philippines: A Challenge to a Special Relationship (Washington, D.C.: The Heritage Foundation, 1983).

There is little to suggest that any of those identified with the Marcos administration would profit in any way by assuming an anti-American posture. Prime Minister Cesar Virata and Defense Minister Juan Ponce Enrile, for example, frequently mentioned as potential successors to Marcos, would find little political advantage in pursuing an anti-American policy. Even Minister of Human Settlements and Mayor of Metro-Manila Imelda Marcos, consort of the President, would gain absolutely no political advantage assuming an anti-U.S. stance.

Ferdinand Marcos has made the position of his administration eminently clear. In his judgment, the agreement between the U.S. and the Philippines regarding the U.S. naval base at Subic Bay and the Air Force installation at Clark Air Base could not be abrogated "without disrupting the present basis of international relations which has certain strategic utility for the stability of [Southeast Asia] and, to a certain degree, to the whole world." Added Marcos: "American development assistance, extended bilaterally as well as through the United Nations and other international institutions, has been a major factor in sustaining economic and social progress in the Third World."

No one in the Marcos administration has suggested abrogation or termination of the U.S.-Philippines military bases agreement, a review of the security relations between the two countries, or a fundamental change in the developmental strategy pursued by Manila for the past decade or so. The reelection of Marcos in the scheduled 1987 voting or his replacement by any member of his administration would result most probably in a continuation of the basic policies that have characterized Filipino politics since the imposition of martial law in 1972. In fact, U.S. interests would be best served by a continuation of Manila's current policies, supplemented by adaptive changes that would foster greater accountability on the part of the Philippine government agencies, more assiduous financial and administrative control over quasi-governmental monopolies in the various productive sectors of the Philippine economy, the assurance of honest and open elections in the local and national contests in 1986 and 1987, and increased protection for civil and political liberties throughout the republic. What this suggests is evolutionary change rather than revolutionary transformation. The alternatives to that process are fairly obvious.

THE ANTI-MARCOS OPPOSITION: THE LEFT

Opposition outside the Marcos party has assumed anti-American postures that could well threaten the peace and security of the entire Western Pacific region. In this regard, there is little

(Ferdinand Marcos, "Genesis of RP-US Relations," in Bulletin Today, Manila, June 2-3, 1983.

doubt about the anti-Americanism of the radical left. The "Maoist" Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and its political extension, the National Democratic Front, are openly and unqualifiedly anti-American in orientation and intention. For the Filipino Maoists, the U.S. remains the "imperialistic oppressor" whose machinations have imposed a "fascist dictatorship" on the Philippines. For them, the only course open to the Philippines is to cut all "neocolonialist" ties with the U.S. and insist upon the immediate removal of all foreign military bases from Philippine soil--since those bases constitute a critical part of the "structure of oppression" that weighs heavily on the islands.⁸

In addition to the organized Maoists, a variety of leftist sects in the Philippines provides the intellectual rationale for anti-Americanism. The radical Christian left espouses a version of "liberation theology" that brands the "capitalist" U.S. as the oppressor of Third World peoples.⁹ The most radical Christian leftists call themselves Christians for National Liberation. The CNL now makes up a constituent part of the Maoist National Democratic Front, and some of its members apparently belong to such groups as the "Light-A-Fire" and "April 6th" revolutionary "liberation" groups.

Those Christian groups associated with former Senator Raul Manglapus are tendentially or explicitly anti-American. They not only oppose U.S. military bases in the Philippines, they oppose U.S. investments in the islands and the presence of U.S. aid officials anywhere in the nation.¹⁰ Recently Armando Malay, one of the most astute political commentators on Philippine politics, spoke of the "surprising similarity of the demands of different groups" on the Philippine left. He remarked that among them "there are hardly any differences in terms of substantive issues. They are all against American imperialism. They all believe that American imperialism is the greatest impediment to development." Moreover, he went on, they all tend to oppose the presence of U.S. military bases on Philippine soil.¹¹

⁸ The "obligation" of the Maoist CPP is to "fight U.S. imperialism and all its local reactionary agents....[The] Philippines has too long served as the bastion of U.S. imperialism....The national united front should be lined up primarily against the class forces of counterrevolution, the U.S. imperialists...." Rectify Errors and Rebuild the Party (Congress of the Re-establishment, Communist Party of the Philippines, December 26, 1968. London: Filipino Support Group, n.d.), pp. 36, 37. See Amado Guerrero (Jose Maria Sison), Philippine Society and Revolution (Oakland: California: International Association of Filipino Patriots, 1979); Programme for a People's Democratic Revolution in the Philippines (Boston, Massachusetts: Philippines Liberation Press, n.d., reprinted from Ang Bayan, Organ of the Central Committee, Communist Party of the Philippines).

⁹ See the discussion in A. James Gregor, "On 'Liberation Theology,'" Cogito (Manila), 1, 2 (June 1983).

¹⁰ Crisis in the Philippines, op. cit., pp. 69-74.

¹¹ Armando Malay, Jr., "Some Random Reflections on Marxism and Maoism in the Philippines," in Marxism in the Philippines, pp. 80-81, see p. 83.

There is little doubt that the views of the Maoist and "Christian" left are inimical to U.S. economic and security interests in the Philippines. While the "Christians" distinguish themselves from the Maoists in terms of certain domestic political arrangements and their vision of the future Philippine society, there is a doleful unanimity of opinion with respect to future Philippine-U.S. relations. Those who identify themselves with "social Christianity" are just as insistent about the necessity of resisting U.S. "economic exploitation" as are their secular Maoist compatriots. They are equally urgent about the necessity of "dismantling the U.S. military occupation of the Philippines." For those concerned with U.S. interests and the future of the Philippines, the choice between the Maoists and Christian left is no choice at all.

THE ANTI-MARCOS OPPOSITION: THE "MODERATES"

Many well-intentioned Americans view the moderates as an acceptable alternative to the Marcos administration in terms both of the vision of a future Philippine society and of U.S. interests in the island nation.

The anti-Marcos "moderates" generally are seen as those who do not call themselves revolutionary Marxist-Maoists. This means that the likes of former Senator Raul Manglapus are classified as "moderate" even though they may be far from moderate in terms of the most vital U.S. interests. Manglapus, for his part, animated by his own interpretation of "liberation theology" and "Christian socialism" has advocated armed revolution against the Marcos government and has declared his opposition to the "patchwork democracy," the capitalist greed, and the military aggressiveness of the U.S.¹² He is a forthright advocate of abrogation of the U.S.-Philippine military bases agreement and characterizes the economic relationship between the two countries as "neocolonial."

Manglapus's view of the U.S.-Philippine relationship is essentially that of the entire anti-Marcos "moderate" opposition. Last December 26, most of the anti-Marcos "moderate" opposition signed a "Declaration of Unity" that specified the principles uniting them.¹³ The signatories included almost every candidate for leadership in a post-Marcos opposition administration: Agapito "Butz" Aquino, Jose W. Diokno, Raul S. Manglapus, Ramon Mitra, Aquilino Pimentel, Jovito Salonga, Corazon C. Aquino, Jaime V. Ongpin, and Lorenzo M. Tanada were among them.

¹² See Reuben R. Canoy, The Counterfeit Revolution: Martial Law in the Philippines (Manila: Reuben R. Canoy, 1980), chap. 5; and Raul S. Manglapus, Philippines: The Silenced Democracy (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1976), Introduction and pp. 25, 27, 55, 60, 63.

¹³ The full text of A Declaration of Unity is to be found in Veritas, Manila, January 6, 1985.

Agapito and Corazon Aquino are the brother and widow of the late Senator Benigno Aquino. While he had remained somewhat ambivalent about his country's economic and security relationship with the U.S., his brother and widow apparently have opted for the position that portrays the U.S. as an "exploiter" of the Philippines and a co-conspirator with the Marcos administration to impose "fascism" on the islands.

Among the remaining "moderates," Jose Diokno and Lorenzo M. Tañada long have been anti-U.S. Diokno has opposed U.S. economic involvement in the Philippines and advocated abrogation of the military bases agreement throughout his active political life.¹⁴ Tañada, similarly, has argued that the anti-Marcos opposition should unite around a program that was "very strong" on making Southeast Asia a "zone of peace and neutrality and to be strongly against the American bases in the Philippines."

The Declaration of Unity of December 1984 was not the first such document produced by the anti-Marcos political opposition. In mid-May 1983, the United Nationalist Democratic Organization (UNIDO) prepared a platform statement that contained essentially the same components. Lorenzo Tañada, who chaired the Anti-Bases Coalition, had succeeded in obtaining the support of former Philippine Senator Salvador Laurel in the campaign against the U.S. bases. Laurel long had been considered a "friend" of the U.S. within the anti-Marcos factions.¹⁵ But in 1983, he concurred that it was necessary to force the withdrawal of U.S. bases from the Philippines. He "confirmed that he had changed his position on the bases from willingness to respect the agreement until it expires in 1991 to insistence that the...treaty be abrogated."¹⁶

Diokno and Tañada had made their position known by 1975. As members of the Board of Editors of the Civil Liberties Union of the Philippines, they accused the U.S. of being an instigator and co-conspirator with Marcos in an alleged plan to impose a "dictatorship" on the Filipino people to "protect U.S. bases, secure U.S. investments, and allow easier entry and greater scope of foreign capital" in the Philippines.¹⁷

Last year's Declaration of Unity committed its signatories to the creation of a "zone of neutrality, freedom and peace, free

¹⁴ See Horacio V. Paredes, "Reconciliation: Doomed from the Start?" Mr. & Ms., Manila, September 16, 1983, p. 19.

¹⁵ Horacio V. Paredes, "National Reconciliation: 'With a Million People Behind You, You Can Not Be Ignored,'" ibid., September 20, 1983, p. 20.

¹⁶ William Branigin, "As Talks Approach, Philippine Opposition to U.S. Bases Grows," International Herald Tribune, May 5, 1983; see San Francisco Chronicle, May 18, 1983, p. F-5.

¹⁷ See The State of the Nation After Three Years of Martial Law, September 21, 1975 (San Francisco: Civil Liberties Union of the Philippines, 1976), p. 25; see "Marcos Foe Blasts New Pact on Bases," San Francisco Chronicle, June 7, 1983, p. 7.

of all nuclear weapons and free from the domination of all foreign powers" in Southeast Asia. What this implied is that "foreign military bases on Philippine territory must be removed and no foreign military bases shall hereafter be allowed."¹⁸

All the prominent members of the anti-Marcos opposition with the exception of Salvador Laurel and Eva Estrada Kalaw signed the Declaration of Unity. Signing this statement against the U.S. bases were: Jovito Salonga, President of the Liberal Party; Jose B.L. Reyes, Chairman of the Anti-Bases Coalition; Aquilino Pimental, head of the Philippine Democratic Party-LABAN; Homobono Adaza, leader of the Mindanao Alliance; Ramon Mitra; Rafael Salas; and Jaime V. Ongpin.

Laurel insists that in "principle" he opposes the presence of the U.S. military in the Philippines, but he says that he wants to canvass public sentiment in the islands before he commits himself to the immediate abrogation of the security arrangements with the U.S.¹⁹ Eva Estrada Kalaw, founder of the National Union for Democracy and Freedom, forerunner of UNIDO, and President of the "Kalaw wing" of the Liberal Party, also refused to sign the Declaration of Unity. Although she has attended rallies protesting the bases agreement,²⁰ she was reluctant to sign the Declaration.

By the beginning of 1985 the political opposition to Marcos, whether identified as "leftist," "centrist," or "moderate," held positions that threatened U.S. economic and security concerns in the Philippines. The reservations by Laurel and Kalaw do not seem to turn on their support of the intrinsic merits of the bases agreement--Laurel has emphasized that he explicitly and in principle opposes U.S. bases in the Philippines. The reservations of Laurel and Kalaw seem to be the consequence of contingent political considerations. Many Filipinos have reminded the anti-Marcos opposition that to advocate the abrogation of the U.S.-Philippines military bases agreement just now is to provoke U.S. resistance at a time when the anti-Marcos opposition would like to elicit Washington's support.

Maximo Soliven, a major Filipino political commentator, has observed that the refusal of Laurel and Kalaw to sign the Declaration of Unity was not evidence of "pro-Americanism" but simply indicated that they "would like to kick Mr. Marcos and [his party] out before they tackle the Americans."²¹

¹⁸ Sections 3.5 and 3.6 of the Declaration of Unity.

¹⁹ "Why Laurel Didn't Sign Scrap U.S. Bases Paper," Filipino Times, San Francisco, February 3-16, 1985, p. 12.

²⁰ See, "8,000 Hit U.S. Bases in Angeles Rally," Bulletin Today, June 14, 1983, p. 36.

²¹ Maximo V. Soliven, "Will Cardinal Sin Become the 'First Communist Pope'?" Mr. & Ms., November 11, 1983, p. 22.

It has become increasingly obvious that the urban-based "moderate" opposition in the Philippines finds one form or another of anti-American posturing essential to their efforts. Almost every rally organized by the anti-Marcos opposition since the Aquino assassination has had unmistakable anti-U.S. overtones.²² In those rallies, the "reds," composed of elements of the Marxist National Democratic Front, have imposed a "radical" character to the proceedings. The "reds" have shown themselves so adept at orchestrating the "parliament of the streets" that the late Aquino's brother, Agapito, now courts them, even at the cost of alienating the "yellows"--those who vaguely identify with the non-Marxist program of his martyred brother.

THE SOURCES OF ANTI-AMERICANISM

U.S. analysts and Filipinos themselves are quick to insist that Filipinos generally neither oppose U.S. interests nor are anti-American in sentiment.²³ Even rural Filipinos, who have joined the anti-U.S. Maoist New People's Army (NPA), apparently harbor few anti-American sentiments. The anti-Americanism in the Philippines today stems mainly from the leaders of the radical and moderate anti-Marcos opposition. Strangely, none of the anti-Marcos opposition groups try to tap the Filipinos' substantial reservoir of pro-U.S. sentiments. Instead, Jose Diokno has insisted that "anyone who takes a pro-American position is immediately suspect in the eyes of the vast majority [of Filipinos]." He is convinced that anyone who is "pro-American" cannot "win the trust of the people."²⁴

Those Filipino politicians most opposed to Ferdinand Marcos harbored anti-U.S. convictions before martial law was imposed in 1972. The export-oriented developmental program put into place by the Marcos administration simply exacerbated their anti-Americanism. The reason: advocates of a "nationalist" developmental policy were committed to insulated growth involving tariff protection for domestic industry. An export driven economy might spur economic growth but also can be painful for well-entrenched, noncompetitive domestic Filipino interests. This outlook was nourished by a collection of beliefs that included the notion that "U.S. imperialism" conspires to destroy the domestic industry of the Philippines and reduce Filipinos to the status of "hewers of wood and drawers of water" for "international capitalism."

These notions are found in a body of literature produced in considerable abundance by intellectuals associated with such

²² See, for example, Manda de Luyong, "For Six Hours, 20 Speakers Talked About What They Were Not Allowed to Say," *ibid.*, pp. 18-19.

²³ See the editorial in the Filipino Times of February 3-16, 1985.

²⁴ See the interview with Jose Diokno, "On the Struggle for Democracy," World Policy Journal, Winter 1984, p. 439.

institutions as the University of the Philippines, the Third World Center, and the Foundation for Nationalist Studies.^{4b} They are prevalent among the student "activists" on the campus of the University of the Philippines. These students organize and supervise the increasingly frequent anti-Marcos rallies. While most of the funding for opposition political activities comes from the middle-class business community, the university radicals have supplied the themes and slogans.

Both the radicals and the moderates advocate a "nationalist alternative" for the Philippines in terms of development and security policies. Both see the basic national problem as "the country's neocolonial status." According to this thesis, the U.S. has used "anti-communism" to keep the Philippines under control in order to advance the "economic objectives" of American capitalism by "perpetuating poverty and underdevelopment." What is offered as an alternative is a policy of self-sufficient economic development with the "assistance of socialist and Third World countries which are willing to transfer technology, give out soft-term loans, and provide stable markets for [Philippine] products."^{4b} Were such policies ever executed, they would impair seriously U.S. interests in the Philippines and Southeast Asia; more important, they would damage severely the Philippine economy.

The "moderate" anti-Marcos opposition acknowledges that, if it came to power, it would govern by a coalition that includes the Maoist Communist Party, which has vowed to retain its arms. The history of such "democratic" coalitions is not encouraging. The coalition that succeeded the Shah in Iran proved less concerned than the Shah about democracy and human rights and was very anti-American. The successors to the "authoritarian" Lon Nol regime in Cambodia proved genocidal as well as anti-American. The Sandinistas who succeeded Somoza in Nicaragua have been less democratic than Somoza.

History gives little reason to suppose that a post-Marcos regime comprised of leftist "moderates" would be any different. This affords the U.S. little reason to support the "moderate" anti-Marcos political opposition. It is openly anti-American. Its political and economic program affords little promise for the future of the Philippines.

^{4a} Typical of this material are Vivencio R. Jose, Mortgaging the Future: The World Bank and IMF in the Philippines (Quezon City: Foundation for Nationalist Studies, 1983) and Ernest Feder, Perverse Development (Quezon City: Foundation for Nationalist Studies, 1983).

^{4b} Renato Constantino, The Nationalist Alternative (Quezon City: Foundation for Nationalist Studies, 1979), pp. 3, 4, 81. Compare this with "UNIDO Suggests 'Alternative,'" Bulletin Today, May 22, 1983, p. 1.

THE ELEMENTS OF STABILITY

In the present Philippine political environment there are constituencies that could contribute to evolutionary change. This would augur well not only for the restoration of political democracy and economic development in the islands, but also for U.S. interests. Among the forces contributing to stable change, the general staff of the armed forces is the most important. They represent the guarantee of institutional continuity that precludes political radicalization. Another key stabilizing force is the Catholic Church. Though some groups within the Philippine Church flirt with the radical left, the Church is basically conservative and evolutionary. Church authorities have spoken out forcefully against the radicals' recourse to violence. While the hierarchy has stood firmly in support of political and civil rights, it has abjured revolutionary solutions.

The business community, however exasperated by the present political and economic crisis, rejects "socialist" solutions. While some enterprises have invested exclusively in production for the home market, most recognize that growth depends on the internationalization of the Philippine economy. Few in the business community urge abandonment of the multilateral economic ties that Manila has developed with the advanced industrial nations. Still less has there been any advocacy of an abandonment of the defense relationship with the U.S.²⁴

Together with the technocrats who have served the Marcos administration well, these military, Church-related, and business elements could provide for continuity and stability as the Philippine political system makes its transition into the post-Marcos period. The next few years will be critical as the Maoist New People's Army exploits deteriorating economic conditions and unstable politics. Amelioration can be expected no sooner than 1986. Until then, those forces supporting controlled and evolutionary change will have to collaborate to maintain the essentials of orderly progress.

THE U.S. RESPONSE

To date, the U.S. position on the Philippine crisis has aimed at fostering progressive evolutionary change. U.S. officials have told Manila that the Reagan Administration wants the full restoration of parliamentary practices and responsible representative elections in the Philippines. At the same time, the Reagan Administration has released substantial funds through the Export-

²⁴ See Crisis in the Philippines, op. cit., pp. 81-83. For a representative collection of Cardinal Sin's speeches, see Jaime Cardinal Sin, Selected Writings on Church-State Relations and Human Development (Manila: Centre for the Development of Human Resources in Rural Asia, 1984).

Import Bank to sustain U.S. exports to the Philippines. The Administration also has continued U.S. economic and military assistance to the islands. For Washington to restrict military assistance now would send signals that are sure to be misread and would bolster the revolutionary Maoist forces, estimated now to have about 15,000 combatants in the field.

What has not been made clear by the Administration or the Department of State to the U.S. public or to the Philippines is the great threat to U.S. security and economic interests posed not only by the radical left but also by the bulk of the "moderate" anti-Marcos political opposition. The U.S. must craft a policy backing evolutionary change in the Philippines. This would include short-term military aid to counter the insurgency and a comprehensive package of economic aid. Southeast Asian nations and Japan, meanwhile, should be pressed to grant Manila concessionary loans.

Should Marcos's health permit, the transition to a "normalized" political system should be conducted with his collaboration and with other forces that support evolutionary change. Marcos still holds considerable political leverage, particularly in rural areas. He can marshal the forces that ensure a transition with minimal institutional tension. There are enough human resources among the technocrats and business community to staff a program of revitalized economic development. There are sufficient representatives from every sector of the Philippine community ready to work with the Kilusang Bagong Lipunan, the dominant political party, to reestablish the integrity of the political system.

Such an economic and political strategy could isolate the radicals in the rural and urban anti-Marcos opposition. With this, anti-Americanism as a mobilizing device would rapidly become less attractive. It is in the best interests of the Philippines and the U.S. that the anti-U.S., radical opposition be defused.

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